

# Inspection report for Portsea Sure Start Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Portsmouth City Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	367857
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 March 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Rodgers HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Tara Robins
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Portsea Community Day Nursery

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's coordinator, staff who work directly with children and families, representatives from the parents' forum, the local authority and some of the centre's partners. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Portsea Sure Start Children's Centre is located in the Portsea area on the first floor of a purpose-built building above the Portsea Community Day Nursery and adjacent to St George's Beneficial Church of England Primary School. It is relatively small in size, comprising three multi-purpose activity rooms that are also used for health consultations and meetings with parents. The centre is a phase one children's centre and received its designation in October 2005. The centre also provides activities with its partners at the John Pound Centre in Portsea.

Portsmouth City Council has overall management responsibility for the centre. Governance of the centre is provided through its partnership board that includes representatives from the local school, health, community centre, the city council and parents. The centre coordinator manages a team comprising a child and family practitioner and a receptionist.

The centre serves an area in the south east of the city of Portsmouth comprising Portsea, Gunwharf and Old Portsmouth which has 618 children aged five and under. Most of the families in the reach area live in Portsea, which has relatively high levels of unemployment, housing association properties and deprivation. Portsea has a high proportion of lone and teenage parents. The majority of families in the reach area are of White British heritage. There are increasing numbers of Arabic, African and Eastern European families, mainly in the Gunwharf area. Most children in the area

enter Early Years Foundation Stage Provision with skills slightly above the level expected for their 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Portsea Children's Centre is a good centre that is managed well. The outcomes for children are good and improving. Staff promote safety, healthy lifestyles and children's development successfully within activities and highlight the good outcomes in visually attractive displays. Partnerships with health professionals are highly effective in improving children's diet and general health. The children the centre supports are well prepared for their transition to school, develop confidence and exhibit good behaviour. The centre continues to increase the proportion of children it works with from the reach area and those it is engaging with achieve better in the Early Years Foundation Stage compared to those not benefiting from the centre's services.

The centre has a small number of volunteers who benefit greatly from developing their playwork and organisational skills working with children. Parents improve their parenting skills through attending courses like 'parent power'. A recent initiative, where a Jobcentre Plus adviser works in the centre, is starting to help parents to find work. However, too few participate in training, education or volunteering that leads to employment and this is impeding their future economic well-being.

Centre staff carefully plan the programme of activities they offer. Partners use their particular expertise to deliver highly-effective sessions, for example in developing children's speech and language. Families enjoy coming to the centre because staff motivate children and help parents in supporting their child's development. They celebrate children's and adults' success well using pictures, case studies and displays. The centre has high quality resources, toys and facilities which are carefully chosen to encourage children's good learning and development. A significant number of families receive very individualised support from home visits. This helps staff identify practical solutions with families for personal and welfare issues. Staff create a

welcoming and inviting atmosphere. They give good care and support which is highly valued by families.

The centre coordinator sets high expectations which are enthusiastically shared with staff and families. Partnerships are strong and are helping the centre to increase the range of activities and services it offers. Centre staff promote equality and diversity well and work productively with partners and parents to remove barriers to participation for the most vulnerable groups and for black and minority ethnic families. Staff and parents place a high priority on safeguarding. Staff carefully risk assess activities, increasing the safety and wellbeing of children. Leaders and the centre coordinator value feedback from parents and use it to inform improvement. The parents' forum is well established and very successful.

Leaders from Portsmouth City Council and the partnership board very effectively challenge the centre's progress towards achieving its action plans. The centre's capacity to improve is good as staff evaluate the provision well and very accurately identify areas for development. In the four months since the centre coordinator has been in post the rate of improvement has been rapid. The centre provides good value for money. The centre coordinator identifies the centre's areas for development well but targets are not always sufficiently measurable to demonstrate the impact of improvement initiatives.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend the centre's reach to assess the needs and widen the participation of those children not yet in contact or receiving services, so as to increase their enjoyment and achievement.
- Maximise the link with the onsite Jobcentre Plus advisor to share funding and intelligence so that more parents participate in training and volunteering that improves basic skills, enhances employability and improves their economic well-being.
- Improve action planning by including precise measures of progress so that the longer-term impact of improvements on outcomes can be evaluated for all target groups.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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Staff promote healthy lifestyles well with parents through specific projects, sessions and information displayed on attractive notice boards. Partnerships with health professionals are highly effective and child health clinics, which have been held at the centre for over a year, are well attended. The centre has a well-devised snack rota which incorporates seasonal foods that can be bought locally, and, as a consequence, families are encouraged to eat a healthier diet. Popular Zumba sessions increase exercise amongst parents, particularly those aged under 25, in order to help them keep fit. Parents have noted improvements in their own and their

children's diet and levels of fitness, but this is not yet reflected in city data about obesity levels, which remain too high. Staff recognise the need to increase breastfeeding rates and have designed informative notice boards to raise awareness, while awaiting the planned 'breast feeding supporter' to start.

Centre staff complete very thorough risk assessments, which they use well to improve facilities and when planning sessions. As a result of this, families view the centre as a safe and welcoming environment and have a good understanding of how to ensure safety in the home. Staff proactively assess the needs of vulnerable families and use their external links and partnerships well when planning visits to provide support in their homes. They initiate intervention and meetings with external professionals, maintaining comprehensive records of discussions and agreed actions which have improved the safety and well-being of children.

Children enjoy attending sessions at the centre and behave well. They develop in confidence and improve their social skills. Staff help improve children's manners and they become more tolerant of other children during sessions with mixed age ranges. Children start to look after the centre's toys and put them away afterwards without prompting. Parents become more involved in their children's play plans through improving their knowledge and skills of child development. One parent said 'I now feel happier doing things with my daughter'. Children who attend the centre are prepared well for the transition to school. Overall, children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased over the last two years but those children in the reach area who are not supported by the centre achieve less well.

Staff take full account of children's interests and listen to the views of their parents when planning new sessions and enhancing the interior of the centre. The parents' forum members are becoming more confident in expressing their views and adapting their conversational skills to suit different audiences and situations. Parents value the opportunity the centre creates for meeting other adults, thus reducing their feeling of isolation. A Jobcentre Plus advisor who is now based at the centre is helping lone parents find employment, but this is at an early stage. Too few parents access training or volunteering that might lead to employment.

*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>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</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>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The programme is soundly based on local and city-wide data and strategies for children and families. Staff very productively link with partners and parents to assess the needs of the local community and identify new and revised services. The centre is introducing programmes for teen parents, first time parents, babies and to address some of the poor adult literacy levels. Staff plan sessions very well to ensure that they link to the Early Years Foundation Stage and promote children's learning and development. They schedule sessions to run alongside those run by health professionals to increase participation and signposting to other services.

Centre sessions are highly effective and staff interact well with families, providing encouragement and motivation. Staff develop facilities and resources imaginatively, inspiring families to try new activities at home. They use good quality tables and chairs to encourage children to sit at a table to eat, and provide floor cushions and mats so parents naturally play at the same level as their children. Children read books eagerly within the dedicated and very attractive tent with fairy lights. Speech and language practitioners make highly-effective links to reading and child development within their sessions. A parent told inspectors that, 'The activities give my child confidence so they can spread their wings and interact and play with other children.' Success by children and their parents is celebrated through stimulating posters, 'in your own words' case studies and well-organised learning journals.

The increasing number of home visits is proving successful in enabling staff to engage with some of those families most in need of support. They provide good-quality support, practical help and individual attention, helping them solve personal and welfare issues. The city council's child development team further enhances home visits by delivering topics like 'messy play' and 'cooking in the home' sessions.

Parents receive good financial support through centre-funded crèches, fitness sessions and taxis to access provision at neighbouring centres. The centre staff are very approachable and one parent commented, 'There is always someone here to give advice, I would have struggled with everyday life without the help from the centre staff.' Parents have sound practical help with completing forms and paperwork, dealing with external organisations and city council departments and resolving issues. A regular advice and guidance partner gives parents a wealth of additional information targeted to their specific needs and questions. The centre runs specific groups targeted at supporting Russian speakers and Black and minority ethnic groups.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**2**

Changes in management have greatly strengthened the centre's capacity to improve, which is good. Staff know the centre's strengths and areas for development well and have accurately evaluated the centre's strengths and suitably prioritised action plans. The centre coordinator is exceptionally enthusiastic and sets high expectations for the centre through an ambitious service delivery plan. Although the centre coordinator has devised specific targets for some of the actions in the service plan, others lack sufficient impact measures. Partnership working is good and used productively to inform the programmes being delivered, including with neighbouring children's centres and health, speech and language professionals. Leaders from Portsmouth City Council and the centre coordinator use data well to monitor the progress with the centre's action plan and trends in participation rates. The percentage of families that engages with the centre has improved each year and is currently good for the areas with highest levels of deprivation.

Leaders from the city council rigorously monitor the performance of the centre and provide both support and challenge for the relatively new team. The partnership board contains an appropriate range of members, including parents, and is starting to challenge the centre's programmes and influence change. The centre has suitable and regular arrangements for reviewing staff performance, clinical supervision and staff meetings.

The parents' forum is highly successful and well established. Parents involve themselves fully and passionately in many aspects of the centre's work. Their feedback has helped staff develop good-quality resources that meet the needs of its families. Two parents said, 'They always ask for our opinion and value our input. We select a lot of the equipment and one of our children even picked out a dolls house for the centre – she was really excited when it arrived.'

Staff promote equality and diversity very well and work hard to ensure groups and individuals are welcomed and not discriminated against. They use targeted initiatives and sessions, like those for Russian speakers and health clinics for overseas families, which help to increase participation by families from diverse groups. The centre is working with all four children in the area who are identified as having a disability or learning difficulty. Staff raise awareness of the centre through talks to families at nurseries with large numbers of Black and minority ethnic children, leaflets translated



into different languages and providing multicultural books and treasure sacks. More lone parents are joining in through sessions such as Zumba and photographic shoots which engage their interest and lead to greater involvement. The centre is taking decisive steps to promote fathers' involvement in their children's development as their participation in activities is low.

All staff place a high priority on safeguarding and very adeptly recognise children and adults who are potentially vulnerable or at risk. Staff and volunteers are well trained in safeguarding and use their expertise to gather information sensitively and assess children's living arrangements during home visits. The centre has effective safeguarding policies which parents have adapted into a clear and concise statement that is easy to understand. Leaders from Portsmouth City Council and the centre coordinator appropriately check staff and volunteers with the Criminal Records Bureau and ensure families are safe when being supported by partners.

*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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</b>

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

Not applicable.

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

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Portsea Sure Start Centre on 28 and 29 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit, we talked with a number of you, visited some of the sessions and met the staff and professionals who work with the centre. We would like to thank all of you who contributed to the inspection.

It was good to see how much you and your children enjoy visiting the centre. Staff place a high priority on making sure that you and your children are safe at the centre. The staff and partners give you good advice about healthy lifestyles, breastfeeding, keeping your child safe and preparing them for their next stage and school. You told us how well your children develop their confidence and improve their behaviour. Many are also eating more healthy snacks. The children who go to sessions at the centre do well when they start school, but those who have not attended the centre are less successful. We have recommended that the centre continues to increase the number of families it works with in the area so all can benefit.

Staff carefully consider the needs of you and your children when they plan sessions. This means that sessions like 'come and sing' have a clear focus on improving your child's speaking and listening skills in a way that is fun. It was good to hear from some of you how the activities have helped you plan the way you play with your child and that they respect other children more. We found that the centre has some very attractive facilities, particularly the tent with fairy lights that encourages children to read books and have quiet time. Staff celebrate achievements positively and your child's achievements are recorded well within the individual and group journals.

Many of you told us about the welcoming, supportive and friendly staff who had made a big difference to your lives. We agreed with you that the support was good. The coordinator has introduced home visits over the last few months which are very successfully taking individual help and guidance to families who would not have visited the centre.

It was good to hear how volunteering and training courses had been a positive experience for some of you. You told us of recent benefits from having a Jobcentre Plus adviser based in the centre. We have asked the centre coordinator to use the information and funding they both have to provide more opportunities and advice about training, volunteering and employment to those of you that need it.

The management of the centre is good. The centre coordinator and staff collect your views and use them to improve the rooms at the centre, the toys available and sessions. The parents' forum is very enthusiastic and passionate in ensuring the

centre coordinator and leaders at the city council know what the Portsea families would like. They are strong ambassadors for your centre. The centre coordinator has ambitious plans for the centre and since taking over the role is making good progress. We have asked the leaders and managers to include measureable targets in their improvement plans so they can more easily measure the success of their actions. A greater number of partners are now working with the centre and this has helped introduce jointly run and funded Zumba classes, the well-attended health clinics and drop in sessions.

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