

Inspection report for Park Futures Children's Centre

Local authority	Hampshire County Council
Inspection number	362539
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Date of previous inspection	n/a
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Linked school if applicable	Warren Park Primary
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY305543 Park Families Warren Park Nursery

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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/childcare provision was carried out a few weeks before the inspection of the centre under Section 3 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 two additional inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with parents visiting the centre as well as parents on the Parent Carer Forum and Partner Management Committee, the chief executive of Park Families, the senior leadership team, two local headteachers, a councillor, front line practitioners, the local authority, speech and language therapists and representatives from the range of services offered. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Park Futures Children's Centre is part of Park Families Ltd, a charity and a company that is limited by guarantee. The centre, including a nursery, is situated in the grounds of Warren Park Primary School in Leigh Park, a suburb of Havant. It opened in 2003 as part of the Sure Start Local Programme. The centre provides the full core offer including education, childcare, family support, outreach and home visiting, child and family health services and Job Centre Plus. The centre serves the electoral ward of Warren Park and part of Battins and Barncroft wards. These three wards are among the 20% most disadvantaged areas in the country, with a high number of families with no working adult. Almost all of the families come from White British backgrounds. Families and their children can access a range of universal and targeted services in the centre or at locations close by. One fifth of the population stay in the area for short periods of time. Over half the residents claiming housing benefit are women and two thirds are single parents. The nursery admits children from three months to five years. Their development when they first start is lower than usually found. The local authority has a contractual arrangement with Park Families Ltd to run the centre and is responsible for its performance management. The Partner Management Committee is the advisory body with representatives of all stakeholders. It receives feedback from the Parent Carer and Practitioner Forums.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Park Futures Children’s Centre plays an important role at the heart of its community, not only for the programmes and support it offers, but as a warm, welcoming and safe place to meet. All staff in the centre, especially those who meet parents and carers first, and the outreach workers, are trusted and knowledgeable about its services, as well as those provided elsewhere. Information from case studies shows that the centre has provided very good support for families in times of difficulty. Users’ personal testimonies confirm that the centre has been instrumental in helping them to make significant changes to their lives by developing their confidence in social and parenting skills. Consequently, they have been empowered to take challenging decisions about their lifestyles. Among many positive comments about the centre, one says, ‘They’ve done so much for me it is unreal. They have totally changed my life.’ The café is used extensively by parents and carers to meet formally and informally to share information, find out about the range of provision, and celebrate their successes.

The centre provides outstanding opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to decision making. Their contributions are made through an annual survey and suggestion slips, their representation on the Partner Management Committee and Parent Carer Forum, informally over a cup of coffee or through feedback during or after courses. One parent said, ‘Staff at the centre have only got to hear you making a suggestion and they will do their best to make sure it happens.’ As a result of one suggestion, the decision was made to provide a plate of healthy food regularly for children for 50 pence. The centre’s positive response to requests to provide courses in health and hygiene and first aid means that volunteers can now help in the cafe and parents and carers feel safer at home and when out with their children. A group of fathers leads the ‘dads’ breakfasts’ on Saturday mornings. These sessions, as well as the ‘mums’ breakfasts’, provide much valued opportunities for parents and carers to enjoy positive experiences and valuable time with their children.

Senior staff lead and manage the centre well and have high aspirations for the community it serves. They make sure that everyone is included, provide programmes

that meet the needs of users and know the areas that they want to improve. The key priority over the past year was to enable children to develop their language skills. This was supported by a project to help children and adults communicate more effectively. Adults in the centre were taught how to help young children to express their ideas clearly. The evaluation carried out afterwards shows this was successful, especially in the nursery. Outreach workers are teaching individuals to use the same methods but, currently, there are limited opportunities in the centre's programme to teach more parents successful ways to develop their child's linguistic abilities.

The centre is working with the local authority on new arrangements for the collection and analysis of information about the local area and the impact of the work of the centre. Realistic and demanding targets have been set. Together with the Partner Management Committee, the local authority challenges the centre's view of its effectiveness to encourage it to improve even more. Current methods for self-evaluation give a realistic view of each service and its contribution to the impact of the work of the centre in the short term. The data collected about the locality are not used sufficiently to show how the centre has brought about long term improvements in the wider community.

The centre provides good care, support and guidance and gives good attention to ensuring users and their children are safeguarded. The recent inspection of the Nursery judged it to be good, providing children with enjoyable experiences. The quality of Park Futures Children's Centre is captured by the view of a parent who said, 'Without Park I wouldn't be as confident a parent or feel at ease that the support was out there for my future parenting needs. I am certain that without it we wouldn't feel part of our community.'

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Provide more opportunities to teach parents how to develop their children's ability to speak and communicate clearly.
- Refine the ways in which the centre gathers information to judge how successful it is by using data to show the impact of its services in the longer term and across the wider community.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Parents and carers praise the good opportunities the centre provides to help their families become physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and to develop healthy lifestyles. Breast feeding and weaning support sessions are well attended. These help parents provide a healthy start to their children's lives. Children in the nursery enjoy nourishing meals at lunchtime, while users can purchase healthy food and snacks in the cafe. Cookery courses, based on well-balanced diets, are popular especially when children join their parents or carers to share the food they have cooked. Parents and carers report that once the course has finished they continue to encourage their children to try some new food each week, as well as cooking meals rather than

relying on frozen or ready-prepared ones. These courses, together with ante- and post-natal clinics draw new people to the centre. Courses such as 'baby massage', 'Help I am a Parent' and 'Have fun as a Parent', as well as 'Fun time Friday', give parents and carers good opportunities to build strong relationships with their children. Following the 'Confident Parents, Confident Kids' course, one parent wrote that it was '...an eye-opening course with easy steps to help you understand your child and yourself better'. The nursery inspection found children's physical development is good. Funds are raised to provide a subsidy that enables families to go swimming in the local pool.

The centre has commissioned the services of a speech therapist and this enables children and their families to access help quickly. Users were particularly disappointed when they were no longer able to obtain the help of a full-time mental health worker. The centre is working with health services to find new ways to give users access to mental health services more frequently. The centre is successful in encouraging hard-to-reach families and fathers to participate in events and reducing their feelings of isolation.

Safety of staff, children and users is a key priority for the centre. Staff know the families well and respond quickly to anxieties. Early identification of concerns leads to intervention by a range of agencies and outreach workers. Information from case studies of children on a protection plan shows that interventions have brought about improvements in users' lives and reduced incidences of physical or mental harm to children. The Common Assessment Framework is delegated to the health services as the centre provides more universal than targeted services. Almost all parents who responded to a survey of the services provided by the centre expressed high levels of satisfaction.

Adults and children make good strides educationally and in their personal and social development, economic stability and independence. Case studies show that users who lacked confidence initially now play a significant role in the centre. The supportive atmosphere has enabled over 100 users to gain nationally recognised qualifications in literacy and numeracy. In some instances the confidence of adult learners has been built really well so they have taken further qualifications or undergone training. They have returned to work, sometimes to completely new careers. Children in the nursery were found to enjoy their learning and children visiting the centre with their parent or carer enjoy looking at the books and playing with the toys available for them.

Parents and carers make a substantial contribution to decision making in the centre. Parent and carer representatives on the Partner Management Committee have been trained appropriately by the local authority so that they have a clear understanding of the governance of the centre. They play a full part in meetings that challenge the centre's view of its effectiveness and what it needs to do to improve. Some parents run groups such as the sewing and knitting workshop. The Parent Carer Forum, together with others in the wider community, act as volunteers and organise fundraising and community events, days out and activities during half term.

Children visiting the centre are well behaved as they have interesting things to do. Those in the nursery were found to be developing skills that will help them in the future, although the inspection judged there is work to do to help them improve their ability to solve problems. Jobcentre Plus is providing advice to parents about how they can return to work or claim the benefits to which they are entitled. Parents appreciated the 'Button up your Budget' course as it taught them how to get the most from their money. One course member said, 'I learned how to manage my money and not throw things away.' Users who find reading difficult are assisted by a skilled tutor to enhance their skills, boosting their confidence so that they can share books with their children and deal with day-to-day matters independently.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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

How good is the provision?

2

Good assessment procedures through linked services, the Partner Management Committee and the senior leadership team enable the centre to make effective provision for users' welfare, health and social needs. Regular evaluations and comments made by users about the services illustrate where there are gaps. Services are changed and tailored to meet individual needs by changing the days and times of courses or amending them to build on what users already know. Through its own evaluation, the centre has been targeting, successfully, families who are harder to reach so the number using the centre is increasing. Fathers who were reticent to use the centre now attend on a regular basis as they appreciate fully the support and friendship it provides. Often support, drawn from different agencies, is personalised to meet individual needs and safeguard young people.

Parents and carers are clear that provision is making a real difference to their lives. The centre not only provides opportunities to develop users' confidence in parenting but also motivate them to study, gain further qualifications and raise their self-esteem. Achievement is celebrated with ceremonies where certificates are awarded by local dignitaries. Free childcare facilities have made it possible for users to access training and development opportunities easily and so make important changes to

their lives. Links with Jobcentre Plus and local colleges provide further opportunities for users to enhance their educational and personal development. Successes include users who have gained qualifications and taken up work in childcare, health visiting and education.

The centre provides a variety of services to meet the core offer, adapting them to meet the changing needs of the community. Families, lone parents and those who find it hard to leave their homes are engaged successfully in the work of the centre. Outreach workers gain their trust and the warm welcome and positive atmosphere offered by the centre have opened up new horizons. One parent, who at one time would not leave her home, could not believe the change in herself or her outlook on life that resulted from her introduction to the centre. All the programmes and drop in sessions are available to adults or children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some programmes, such as those for pregnant teenagers and teenage parents, are coordinated and presented in a nearby centre where they can meet in a larger group.

The quality of care for young children is good in the nursery and crèche. As the centre is at the heart of the community, and easy to reach, attendance at the health clinic is high. These visits give parents the opportunity to seek advice from a midwife or health visitor without waiting for an appointment. One parent said that she found the post-natal provision ‘...really useful’. She went on to say, ‘It got me out of the house to meet new people.’ The centre is part of a community oral health campaign. Children in the nursery clean their teeth after meals. Parents and carers can obtain toothpaste and exchange old toothbrushes for new ones free of charge. Users benefit from advice from other local centres to reduce smoking, alcohol consumption and drug abuse. Job advisers in the centre give advice about how to write a job application, attend interviews and the skills needed to take up work in the locality.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Arrangements for governance and accountability are understood well by senior leaders, and by members of the Partner Management Committee and Parent Carer and Practitioner Forums. The Partner Management Committee is keen to develop

stronger links with schools and health services. A teacher has been employed recently by the centre to work with schools and to help narrow the gap in the number of children who achieve expected levels in their learning and development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. An early years practitioner oversees the quality of Park Families childcare provisions. The annual conversation between the centre and the local authority offers challenges to bring about further improvement. Links with the local authority are also assisting with long-term strategic and development planning, as well as sustainability.

Staff are keen to make a difference to the lives of those living in the community. Park Families is drawing on skills in this centre to open another children's centre within Leigh Park. This is intended to extend its provision, for example to reduce the number of people who smoke and to develop the skills of young people to get them back into work. Members of the senior leadership team have a good understanding of their roles and how they are making a difference to the lives of individuals, not only in the centre but in the wider community. The centre is popular as it attracts people from outside its immediate area.

Procedures for safeguarding and recruiting new staff are robust. All staff have been trained in safeguarding procedures and have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. Staff who are not employed by the centre provide evidence of their suitability to work unsupervised with children. In addition, staff work with outreach workers and other agencies to protect vulnerable children and adults. They advise parents and carers about how they can access services that protect them from domestic violence and alcohol and drug abuse in other centres and support them while they are attending.

Users' views influence provision strongly and some changes are made quickly, such as the inclusion of sessions to assist parents whose children are fussy eaters in the programme. The Parent Carer and Practitioner Forum, together with the Partner Management Committee and ideas from staff, helps the centre to decide key priorities for development in the longer term. Targets for improvement are ambitious, based on senior leaders' detailed knowledge of the area. While the centre is clear about its impact in the short term, it is less aware of long term effectiveness. For example, the impact of the project to develop children's language skills has not been tracked to find out how it helped children when they transferred to the primary school.

All children and their families are welcome in the centre. A free crèche is available to enable those wishing to study or attend sessions without their children. The Nursery also admits children to give their families respite and the chance to manage difficulties they are facing more confidently. Local community events, organised by volunteers, promote the centre strongly, as well as the importance of keeping fit and healthy. The centre fulfils its statutory duties. Resources are managed efficiently to benefit the community. Rooms are designed to allow flexible use of the building, which is accessible to those with disabilities. The centre provides good 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	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

The inspection report for EY305543 Park Families Warren Park Nursery was used to inform the judgements made during this inspection. The setting was inspected on 17 September 2010 and its effectiveness was judged good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Park Futures Children's Centre on 19 and 20 October 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us during the inspection. You said that your centre plays a central role in the community and we agree. You told us, and we could see from your course evaluations, that your centre has helped you to make important changes to your lives and to those of your children. The centre enables you to contribute a great deal to the decisions that are made about the way it works, the services that it offers and the programmes that are provided to help you learn new skills. Many of you who are regular visitors to the centre are keen members of the Parent Carer Forum and are volunteers who assist in many ways, such as the sewing and knitting workshop, as well as with fundraising and fun days. Some of you have completed first aid and health and hygiene courses so that you can help out in your popular cafe.

Your favourite sessions in the centre include the cookery courses that show you how to make tasty, nutritious food for your families. You really appreciate being able to share what you have cooked with the children before you go home. You told us that you have continued to try out new foods and cook the recipes you have been taught so that your children are becoming healthier. Other favourite sessions include the dads' breakfasts and mums' breakfasts that are special times for you to enjoy with your children. One dad wrote, 'The dads' breakfast offers experiences that my family simply could not have had without it.' The adult literacy and numeracy lessons, where you can gain qualifications in a supportive atmosphere, are also popular. These have motivated you to go on to gain other qualifications, including childcare, and return to work. The centre does a good job in helping you to improve your parenting skills. Following the 'Confident Parents, Confident Kids' course, one of you wrote that it was 'an eye-opening course with easy steps to help you understand your child and yourself better'. The 'Button your Budget' course was described as fun. 'I learned how to manage my money and not throw things away.' Family outreach workers, speech therapists and the centre's links to other agencies are giving you the support and knowledge you need to overcome difficulties that you are facing. The loss of a mental health nurse was a disappointment to you. Provision remains in the centre part time as a mental health worker leads the 'Help I am a Parent' session. The centre is working hard behind the scenes to arrange new ways of providing access to mental health advice.

The senior staff lead and manage the centre well. They make sure that everyone is included. They know the key areas that they want to improve. A priority is to enable children to develop their language skills. A project to help children and adults communicate well was carried out over the past year. Adults in the Nursery were taught how to help your young children to express their ideas more effectively. This was successful and, as a result, children who were involved in the project can say what they want to say more easily. Outreach workers are now teaching some of you to use the same methods, and plans are in place to extend provision to help more of you to help develop your children's communication skills. There are too few opportunities for this in the centre at present.

The centre is working with the local authority on new arrangements to gather information about the area that the centre serves and the impact of its work. Together with the Partner Management Committee, the local authority challenges

the centre's view of its effectiveness to encourage it to improve even more. Each service reviews its strengths and areas for development using the views of staff and participants. This gives a realistic view of each service and its contribution to the impact of the work of the centre in the short term. The data collected about the locality are not used sufficiently to show how the centre has brought about long term improvements in the wider community.

The centre is determined to provide you with good care, support and guidance. It gives good attention to ensuring you and your children are safeguarded. We agree with you that the atmosphere of the centre is warm, welcoming, friendly, and a safe place to be. The recent inspection of the nursery judged it to be good, providing children with enjoyable experiences. This is invaluable to some of you whose children attend the nursery to give you a break from the significant demands you are dealing with. The quality of Park Futures Children's Centre is captured by the view of a parent who said, 'Without Park I wouldn't be as confident a parent or feel at ease that the support was out there for my future parenting needs. I am certain that without it we wouldn't feel part of our community.'

We have asked the centre to:

- provide more opportunities to teach parents how to develop their children's ability to speak and communicate clearly
- refine the ways in which the centre gathers information to judge how successful it is by using data to show the impact of its services in the longer term and across the wider community.

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