

# Inspection report for Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	372949
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Centre governance	Local Authority
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Date of previous inspection	22 June 2007
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Linked school if applicable	Park Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Park Children's Centre (Childcare)

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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 additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the acting centre manager, senior leadership team, members of the Partnership Board, staff and representatives from the local authority. They also held meetings with partner agencies, including health services, parents, carers and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents, including key policies, the centre's development plan, user surveys and the centre's evaluation of its services.

## Information about the centre

Park Children's Centre is situated within the grounds of Park Primary School in Aldershot. The children's centre hosts a Hampshire County Council maintained nursery offering sessional and full day care. All services delivered on site are housed in one main building which was a former Early Years Centre. The centre is home to a range of community services and activities run by the centre or in collaboration with its partner agencies. The centre has recently undergone further building work to enhance the buggy park and to provide more space for administrative staff.

Park Children's Centre notional catchment area (NCA) sits within the Borough of Rushmoor, a district with the third highest incidence of deprivation in Hampshire. A range of services are run from outreach provisions in the NCA community including local schools, a scout hut, a church and, under recent development, a community flat. Park Children's Centre is set in Heron Wood ward within a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) of disadvantage. Aldershot, as home to the British Army, has a transient population with many families often far away from their own support networks of families and friends. Rushmoor as a whole has significant challenges with the third highest incidences in Hampshire of teenage pregnancy and childhood accidents. Rushmoor also has the highest incidence of childhood obesity. The acting centre manager is a member of the Local Implementation Team (LIT) for Teenage Pregnancy which is a multi-agency approach to reducing the incidence of teenage

pregnancy. Levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below average.

There is an above average level of worklessness and, as a result, a higher-than-average proportion of families that are dependent on benefits. The centre serves a predominantly White British community. However, there is a growing population of increasing diverse nationalities and backgrounds with the Nepalese being the most represented ethnic minority group.

## 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**

**1**

## Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Park Children's Centre is good. This is because it provides good opportunities and a rapidly improving range of services for children, their families and other adults. The outreach work that is taking place is excellent, as is the partnership with health services. The centre's development plans show that a very solid base of services and courses had been laid down in the last two years. The acting centre manager, who has been in post for less than a year, has moved this forward exceptionally well and this has had a significant impact on the way services are integrated and expanded, to the great benefit of the users. There are now cohesive packages of services for children and their families which impact positively on their lives. Many partnerships, particularly with health professionals and the on-site early learning nursery and childcare providers, are outstanding. As one practitioner said, 'Partnerships are seamless.' One of the problems the centre manager and staff have now is to meet the demand for courses they have created. There have been a few parents who, after being well motivated, have been unable to attend courses due to lack of spaces.

Governance at all levels is of high quality. The Partnership Board members are proactive in the management of the centre and they share the vision for improvement, along with all layers of staff. There is a real sense of commitment from all levels of management, including the parent forum, to continue to improve and extend what is on offer to a wider field. Morale is very high and all staff are aware of the ambitious targets that are driving the improvements they all want to see.

Equality and diversity are, as one parent stated, 'what this centre is all about', and drive improvement. The systems for managing the performance of staff and for their professional development are used outstandingly well. Self-evaluation at all levels is rigorous and based on very careful analysis. This, plus a lack of complacency, leads to there being an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

Children and users feel extremely safe at the centre and procedures for safeguarding them are outstanding and permeate through the centre. The way the centre works in partnership with others is very good. It has been particularly beneficial in helping parents return to work and in the provision of health care as midwives and other health professionals work from the centre. The work and support that the centre gives to the most vulnerable families are often exceptional, especially when these families find themselves in times of crisis. This is based on the excellent assessment of individual families' needs. The majority of families are fully engaged with health services, including many who are hard to engage. As a result, a large majority show they are developing a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. The quantity of in-depth data about the user groups means the evaluations are usually rigorous and accurately measure impact. However, the effectiveness and impact of the crèche facilities during some of the course sessions for parents have not been evaluated. As a result, these sessions are not as well planned and opportunities are being missed to engage the children and meet their needs in full.

Educationally, the percentage of children who achieve 78 points or more at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been improving year on year. However, the information available to carry out a highly specific analysis of Early Years Foundation Stage data is fragmented. The centre is now developing its own method of capturing the information from the schools the children go on to join.

Those who use the centre are extremely satisfied with what it has to offer and feel they have a real voice in developing the services to meet their needs.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Make spaces available to all those who wish to attend courses by using the centre's spacious facilities and resources to the best effect.
- Review the planning and purpose of the crèche activities so that children's needs are fully met and children make maximum progress.

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

<b>2</b>
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The centre is doing much to establish healthy lifestyles for centre users through specific programmes such as Cook-n-Eat and facilitating access to health care professionals to encourage and sustain breastfeeding. Well-attended childcare courses have a strong focus on healthy lifestyles. The programmes to help with stopping smoking are well established and their impact is well catalogued and used effectively.

Adults and children are kept very safe when at the centre through tight security at the entrance and strong staff awareness. The children who are most vulnerable and those who have child protection plans are very well monitored and supported. The Common Assessment Framework is used very well to identify needs and to monitor support and progress. The centre can point to notable successes where parents have been encouraged and funded to access services such as the nursery, which has led to very rapid progress being made in the way children develop their basic skills and personal development. Paediatric first aid is included in the well-attended parenting skills course for new mothers run by midwives.

Children and adults show very high levels of enjoyment of the wide range of activities available to them. The centre has been particularly successful in supporting fathers and male carers with Saturday Stay and Play sessions and a dads' group. This has led to children enjoying a wide range of activities with their fathers/carers, such as day trips, seaside visits and also experiencing exciting activities on the many picnics. One father stated, 'It's been so good to have somewhere to bring the kids at the weekend and to meet other dads.' Parents report that the high level of support they have received has helped them with their parenting skills so that their children's social and emotional development are much enhanced and children behave well.

Very positive relationships are prevalent throughout the centre. Parents who were initially very hesitant to access the facilities are now its most vocal ambassadors and make a very strong contribution to decision-making through the parents' forum, working parents' group, and dads and male carers group. As one mother said, 'This really feels like our centre and we can get what we need.'

One of the centre's many strengths is the adult training, support and advice to enable adults to return to work. Working extremely well with other partners, such as the Rushmore Healthy Living group, parents are given the confidence to retrain or re-enter the job market. Parents with low levels of literacy or for whom English is not their first language have their skills improved through highly effective courses. Their achievements are celebrated very well, further enhancing their confidence. There are many notable successes due to the high-quality advice and guidance given by the centre's staff. However, some parents have been unable to access courses because of over-subscription for places.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>healthy lifestyles</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 users 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 positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

**2**

The centre assesses the needs of the community well and the excellent outreach work is fundamental to this. Common Assessment Frameworks are regularly reviewed and staff have a highly detailed knowledge and understanding of the centre users and their families. However, the centre is hampered to a limited extent by the lack of analysis of the statistical information from the many schools and nurseries it is linked with to enable it to make finely-honed assessments of the needs of the wider area.

Very well run programmes, some targeted at the most vulnerable users, have had excellent outcomes in encouraging them in their educational and personal development and their parenting skills. Those spoken to say they have gained very helpful knowledge in relation to breastfeeding and how to cope with their children's behaviour. They feel less isolated and very much part of a community now.

There is a good range of services meeting the needs of the wider community and the centre is very reactive to suggestions from users. The centre has improved the number of contacts with lone parents, fathers and ethnic minority groups substantially in the past year. The very accurate and user-friendly information about the immediate locale has enabled them to meet the needs of more specific groups such as smokers and teenage parents very well. Parents and children with disabilities and/or special educational needs, although few in number, are very well supported and fully included in the centre.

The quality of care, guidance and support for families is exceptional. The impact of the family parenting support and outreach work is outstanding. Although the member of staff nominally responsible for the outreach work is currently absent, the centre has continued its work in reaching further afield to target more vulnerable and deprived groups. This year many additional contacts have been made as a result of outreach work. Excellent relationships with staff enable parents to have a very high degree of trust in them, turning to them in times of crisis. Home visiting and perseverance have led to more families accessing the centre and gaining significantly from it. The work of the adviser from the Rushmore Healthy Living group, with

regard to debt and services, is outstandingly effective. Midwives and health visitors are also highly effective in the support that they give.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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Governance and management of the centre are outstanding and are key to the centre's excellent capacity to improve even further. The work of the acting centre manager and staff has more effectively joined up the way the centre is run and has had a significant impact on the outcomes for users. The Partnership Board members are very proactive in the management of the centre. Their levels of skill, experience and passion for the work of the centre mean that they can be challenging and proactive. The Board represents the users and partners to a good degree and as such its views are highly regarded and acted upon by the management. Senior leaders have very high expectations of staff that are shared with them and with the centre's many partners. The development plan fully reflects these expectations. The great deal of useful data available, much from the centre's own data collection, is used very effectively to enable identified targets to be very specific and measurable. This data collection and analysis is recognised as a relative strength by the centre.

Resources are managed effectively. Activities are costed carefully and evaluated according to their success so that the centre provides good value for money. For example, the Saturday Stay and Play is an expensive programme to run but is considered very valuable in improving access for fathers and working parents and helping their parenting skills in the process.

Equality and eliminating discrimination are at the core of the centre's work. The centre responds swiftly to any concerns, such as when a parent felt another was being racist. Staff responded immediately and effectively so that there was a greater level of understanding and parents continued to attend, thereby benefiting from what the centre offers. Some previously hard to reach groups, such as the growing Nepalese community, have been encouraged to come to the centre as a result of strong partnership work with health services and the highly effective outreach work on local housing estates and schools. The modern and bright building is completely accessible for wheelchair users and children and adults with disabilities are fully included and well supported.



Safeguarding is paramount in the centre. There are very robust procedures and continually reviewed records are kept of everyone connected to its work. All staff play a highly important monitoring role in this aspect. Staff training is extensive with all staff trained to at least Level 1, and several staff trained to Level 2 in safeguarding. Early notification of any child protection concerns leads to swift action that is recorded in the centre’s confidential files. Staff who work with children and vulnerable adults are extremely watchful and alert to concerns and are very clear about procedures.

Self-evaluation is accurate, although at times over modest as the centre’s management is far from complacent. Views of users are continually taken into account, gathered from parents’ forum meetings, the Partnership Board and through many feedback surveys. Changes are made as a result of evaluation, for example the time and day of a Stay and Play session was changed to target more vulnerable and needy families. However, the crèches provided to support parents’ attendance at courses are not always evaluated and are therefore not always planned well enough to fully benefit the children attending.

Partnerships with other agencies are outstanding and reflect the hard work centre staff have put in to meet the emotional and physical needs of users. For example, health visitors, midwives, a nutritionist and links with childminders have all contributed greatly to the outcomes for users of the centre. Antenatal appointments are held in the evening for working parents’ convenience and a new health room is under development. Local businesses support the centre very well, providing opportunities for users to visit exhibitions and heritage sites and get involved in the rich Forces history on their doorstep.

The community is constantly encouraged to engage with the services offered through high-quality leaflets delivered to each household, through the highly-effective outreach and through being signposted and referred by local health organisations. Satisfaction levels are very high. For example, of the many users spoken to informally and formally during the inspection, there was nothing but praise and gratitude for the services offered and the support given. Many users had been given a sense of self-worth and confidence that had been absent before and this is having a very positive impact on their relationships with their children and hopes for the future.

<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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>

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

None

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Park Children's Centre on 9 and 10 March 2011. We judged the centre to be good overall and to be a place where parents and their children make good progress. We found that with the acting centre manager and with strengthened partnerships with other centres, schools and service providers, Park is improving rapidly and already has several outstanding features.

During our visit we looked at the centre's plans for development and numerous other documents, we spoke to a very wide range of partners working with the centre, visited some of the activities and spoke to members of staff and those who manage the centre. Those of you who spoke to us were unanimous in your praise for the centre and especially how it had helped you grow in confidence in various aspects, but in particular in the way you are enabled to look after and work with your children.

Many of you were especially positive about the outreach work done from the centre and described how their contact and support eventually tempted you in and so

enabled you to access a wealth of support, advice and guidance. This had led some of you to work opportunities and to a greater involvement in the running and management of the centre. Your parenting skills and knowledge of how to keep your children safe and healthy have also benefited greatly.

There is a great sense of team work and professionalism amongst all the staff and managers of the centre and although the centre manager has been in post for less than a year, she has already had a very strong impact on the way the centre is run. Partnerships are excellent and so you can access the expertise of midwives, health visitors and employment advisers in the wonderful building in the heart of your community.

Everyone in the centre has safeguarding at the heart of what they do and so your children are very safe there. Policies, procedures and risk assessments are very robust. The very high levels of care, guidance and support that staff give, especially to those whose needs are greatest, are very effective because staff know everyone and their particular problems well and can quickly access the right support.

To help the centre improve even more we have asked the leaders and staff to make sure that those of you who are keen to join in the courses they offer are all enabled to do so. We also want them to make sure that the crèche facilities your children are given are well planned and make the most of the time they are there.

Thank you very much for contributing to the inspection by being willing to give your time to talk to us and express your wholeheartedly positive views.

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