

# Inspection report for The Harbour Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	367867
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Diane Wilkinson

<b>Centre governance</b>	The governing body of Eling Infant School
<b>Centre leader</b>	Beverly Smith
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	This is the centre's first inspection
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Eling Infant School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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## 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 co-located/partner primary school was carried out the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and co-ordinator as well as members of staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Discussions were also held with a variety of users who visited the centre during the inspection, members of the partnership board and representatives of the partners who work with the centre. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

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

## Information about the centre

The Harbour Children’s Centre is a phase two centre which opened in 2008. Eling Infant School has been contracted by the local authority to manage the centre and its governance. There is a partnership board with professional and parent representation and a parent forum also contributes to evaluation and support for the centre’s work. The centre is situated in a single building based in the grounds of the school and serves the communities of central and south Totton and Marchwood. Services are also delivered at The Mulberry Centre in Marchwood and the centre works closely with the Patch Children’s Centre in Totton, delivering some services in partnership at the Totton and Eling Community Centre. The centre manager is the headteacher of Eling Infant School. She manages a centre coordinator, playworker, two family support and outreach workers (FSOWs) and an administrative support worker. Local midwives, the speech and language support team and a Jobcentre Plus (JCP) worker also provide services at the centre. The centre works closely with a wide range of other professionals to support children and their parents and also provides activities for children and their parents over the summer holiday period.

The social and economic circumstances of families in the area the centre serves vary and the reach includes a large area of social housing in which some families are in temporary accommodation. The levels of workless households, single parent families and teenage parents are above the local authority average. The majority of families are of White British heritage, although the centre also serves families at a large Ministry of Defence site, situated in Marchwood, who are mainly Fijian and Ghanaian, and also a site for Traveller families. There is no day care provision but the centre has close links with local pre-schools and childminders in the area. The centre also liaises with Eling Infant School and the three other primary schools to which children transfer, including those in Marchwood. The proportion of children working at the age-appropriate levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is below expectations.

### 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

The Harbour Children's Centre provides a good range of effective services for families and children in the area that it serves. It is well led and managed and centre staff are exceptionally good at building up excellent partnerships with other services to help support those who use the centre. Children and their parents benefit considerably from the regular visits to the centre by local midwives and speech and language therapists. Parents say that being able to access these services in the very warm and welcoming ethos that the centre provides is a real bonus for families.

Policies and procedures to safeguard centre users are good, and improving. Outstanding protocols are in place for partnership working with social care which have had led to a marked improvement in efficiency in carrying out monitoring of child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework. Plans are already in hand to extend this to joint working with other services. Courses to help parents develop strategies for keeping their children safe help ensure welfare concerns are speedily identified and addressed. The quality of care, guidance and support for users is outstanding. The midwifery and speech and language teams praise the strategies centre staff use to support the families with whom they are involved, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Excellent individual programmes support the most vulnerable families exceptionally well in helping to address significant problems.

The centre is very inclusive and welcoming, working hard to meet the needs and aspirations of all families. All who use the centre recognise that staff support them to resolve problems and bring about real changes in their lives and those of their children. Very effective links with the army welfare service at Marchwood help to engage military families with the centre. Strengths such as these help ensure that users' equality of opportunity is good and that families are well aware that any discrimination will not be tolerated.

Children and parents greatly enjoy the centre. Children enthusiastically join in activities, and parents visiting the centre are full of praise for its work. The centre's services are promoted very well in the local area and are consistently recommended to others by families already registered. As a result, the number of families using centre services has risen considerably over the past year to include a large majority of the families in the centre's reach area. Parents make a significant contribution to centre services; for example, some help to run music and song sessions and a group to support disabled parents and children.

Parents have a very good range of opportunities to enhance their parenting skills, for example in behaviour management and how to deal with hazards at home. As a result, both children and their parents develop an excellent awareness of how to stay safe. Adult training needs are assessed and provided for well through a local college in conjunction with Jobcentre Plus. Activities and support help families develop a good awareness of how to live healthy lifestyles. Midwives and speech and language therapists report that joint working is bringing about good improvements in children's

health and language development. Although activities such as 'Stay and Play' promote children's learning and development well, there are no formal systems in place to help judge the progress individual children make towards the Early Years Foundation Stage goals and to help plan future activities that build on and extend this. This is the main reason why their achievement in this area is satisfactory.

National and local authority data are used effectively to evaluate and modify services to meet needs. Very good use is made of comprehensive feedback from parents and informal evaluation of different activities. This has led to adjustments, for example to the provision for children aged 12 to 24 months. Services have improved well over the past year, with a strong determination to improve them further, giving the centre a good capacity to do so. However, the lack of quantifiable data on the impact of some services on improving outcomes for users makes it more difficult for staff to judge the most effective ways to do so.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the methods for collecting, collating and evaluating data about the activities provided by the centre and its partners in the reach in order to measure the impact these are having on families.
- Develop more robust systems for planning and assessing children's learning and development in relation to Early Years Foundation Stage goals in order to ensure that:
  - parents and other providers who work with children receive accurate information about their progress
  - planned activities effectively build on and extend children's development.

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

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes are good and improving for the large majority of users. Without exception, parents report that the centre is making a significant difference to their lives and those of their children. The centre's popularity is growing, partly because they tell their friends how good it has been at supporting them. Excellent care, guidance and support help families subject to child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework, and those supporting looked after children, to benefit as well as others.

There is a very good emphasis on learning together and staff take every opportunity to help parents recognise how they can extend their children's learning and development at home. Staff encourage parents to develop a close bond with their children so that the latter feel secure and confident to participate in new things and there has been a very good response to baby massage sessions. Fathers are involved well in centre services, especially through the popular 'Saturdads' session and through encouraging them to volunteer to lead centre activities.

Staff are very careful to ensure that activities promote learning and development for

children in all important outcomes. The centre benefits from the expertise of its playworker so that staff and volunteers are very good at making learning really enjoyable. This is evident in the enthusiastic way children join in activities. For example, at the 'Wiggle and Giggle' session during the inspection, babies, encouraged by their parents, joined in the movement with great delight. Activities such as 'Active Tots' help develop positive attitudes to a healthy lifestyle. Through the healthy snacks and drinks provided and the popular cookery sessions, families gain a good knowledge of how to eat healthily, and, as a result of midwifery support, the percentage of mothers who breastfeed is improving well. A recent oral health programme has resulted in more parents using the correct brushes and paste for cleaning children's teeth.

The safety of all users is given high priority, with some innovative activities such as a course run for parents on resuscitation and other ways to deal with dangerous incidents at home. Parents are well aware that they are responsible for their children's behaviour whenever they are present, with staff consistently modelling good behaviour management. The centre provides very effective courses relating to this important parenting skill which are well attended. Children learn to behave safely. They are starting to relate well to each other and adults and to persevere and share things. In partnership with the speech and language support team, the language development of those children with specific needs is improving well. Strengths such as these help prepare parents and children well for the future, especially with regard to their health and safety. Children learn new skills in the play sessions. For example, they use construction resources to develop their motor skills and learn about size and position or start to count the items they place in the wheelbarrow. Children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage within the local area and centre reach have been fairly static, whereas nationally they rose last year. Leaders recognise that the lack of robust assessment data to inform the planning of activities that build on children's previous learning is a priority for improvement.

Adults benefit from a considerable range of courses aimed at increasing their parenting skills. These are valued and enjoyed by users. Parents have the opportunity to attend courses to increase, for example, their money management skills, and Jobcentre Plus and the Youth Support Team provide good support and signposting to courses that help to develop important workplace skills. The centre is fortunate that job opportunities are more plentiful in the reach than in some areas in the New Forest District and centre parents benefit from advice on vacancies provided by Jobcentre Plus and the support its staff provide in the interview process.

These are the grades for the outcomes of users

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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, and 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>3</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 and employment</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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When users register at the centre, staff make a very careful assessment of their needs and the aspirations they have for themselves and their families so that activities and services can be effectively adjusted to provide for these. Good use is made of participants' evaluations to help shape services, and parents are welcome to suggest courses or activities that they could help the centre establish or lead. Programmes such as 'Triple P' and 'PEEP' support parenting skills well. 'Active Tots' and 'Stay and Play' support children's learning in a wide range of skills, including speech and language and creative and physical development. However, leaders do not yet have enough information about the impact of specific activities provided at the centre or in partnership with local organisations to analyse exactly how effective they are. Courses held at other venues, including in the Mulberry Centre at Marchwood, ensure that all parents and children registered at the centre have access to activities. Jobcentre Plus is extremely helpful in assessing individual workless users' needs and supporting them to get back into the workforce. Where needed, staff provide crèche facilities and the comprehensive programme of holiday activities is much appreciated by centre users.

Centre users benefit especially well from the breadth of partner organisations the centre works with. This gives staff the capacity to support a considerable range of needs, for example coping with debt, addiction or mental health concerns. Staff are very effective in signposting parents to courses provided by other organisations, including through volunteer groups or charities, and through this, parents are able to access support and advice, for example on giving up smoking and dealing with alcohol addiction. Centre staff, especially the family support and outreach workers, work diligently to engage with isolated or hard-to-reach parents, linking well with those Traveller families with young children in the reach and lone parents who enjoy the social benefits of centre activities.

Staff who manage and work in the centre are extremely caring and place high priority on the welfare of centre users, working very effectively to ensure they receive the very best support the centre can provide. This ranges from highly tailored support which encourages isolated parents to attend the centre to specific support for those who have disabilities or are coping with considerable changes in family life. Any child protection or Common Assessment Framework concerns are taken extremely seriously and staff work exceptionally well with other agencies in a highly



supportive way to help users address the issues. Centre families are extremely appreciative of how the centre provides them with the support and skills to help improve their lives and those of their children.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<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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Staff confidence in the leadership and management is high and consequently teamwork is very good, with all sharing the same vision and goals for families in the reach. Leadership and management are strong, realistic and reflective so that there is a good awareness of where services can be enhanced or improved. Users play a major role in helping to design and set up services, where possible supporting at activities and on occasions running them. They express very high levels of satisfaction. Their views, together with those from the parents' forum, local community and partners, help to make self-evaluation effective and aid centre staff in devising a good service delivery plan. However, the lack of quantifiable data to help judge how well families benefit from the specific services it provides makes it more difficult for staff to pinpoint the exact features that are successful or need improvement.

Both the centre manager and coordinator are exceptionally well focused on meeting the needs of individuals, ensuring that this is a very supportive and inclusive centre. The administrative support worker plays a key role in enhancing this inclusive ethos when advising potential users and welcoming all who attend the centre. There is a very good awareness of the centre's role in supporting diversity, preventing discrimination and ensuring equality of opportunity. As a result, users from different groups, such as those with disabilities, feel very much part of the centre and gain the confidence to make a contribution to its services. Strengths such as these are fundamental to The Harbour's success and why centre users are so appreciative of its work.

The day-to-day running of the centre benefits from the exceptionally effective coordinator, who empowers and supports staff to do their best. Governance is good, offering an effective balance of challenge and support. The partnership board, which includes representatives from other partners, such as health services and army welfare, supports governance well. Members willingly use their expertise to support

the centre, for example in fundraising. A major reason for the centre's success is the way in which staff have built up exceptionally strong relationships with other professionals so that they can work productively together to support families across areas such as those concerning physical and mental health, disability, learning, language, financial, legal and social needs. This means that, whatever need a user has or in which aspect they need advice, the centre can speedily put them in touch with the relevant organisation.

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place and these are regularly monitored and updated. Staff are well trained and very vigilant as to any potential hazards or concerns. Recent improvements to partnership working with regard to children and families at risk have brought real benefits to centre users. Parents' views are regularly sought and acted upon. Centre staff provide very good advice regarding hazards that parents are concerned about at home or in the wider community.

Staff make good use of the accommodation to maximise the services offered on site. Services at other venues, such as The Mulberry Centre in Marchwood and a community centre in Totton, enhance their work. Resources are regularly reviewed and adapted well to support activities. Centre management is very supportive of staff training, for example in baby massage, so it can provide more effectively for users' needs. The family support and outreach workers are deployed to very good effect to reach isolated, vulnerable and hard-to-reach families. These strengths help ensure that the centre provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider</b>	<b>1</b>

community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	
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## Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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 from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected the The Harbour Children's Centre on 22 and 23 June 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We were pleased to speak to many of you who were at the centre during our visit. Thank you for giving up your time for this. We were also able to look at details of feedback that you have given to centre staff and to talk with some of you who help the centre in its work, including setting up and running activities. In these aspects, you provide especially good support to the centre and staff greatly appreciate your contribution. We also looked at a range of documentation and evidence provided by centre staff. These showed us that you value the work of the centre highly and are keen to tell your friends about it and get them to come along too. We are very pleased that you think the centre is supporting you and your children and that it is making a significant difference to your lives.

We found that centre staff are very responsive to your individual needs and aspirations for your families. As a result, they are very good at adjusting or setting up new activities to benefit you and your children. Staff are especially good at working with other organisations and services to help support you and, if you have a specific concern, will ensure that you can contact the right people to help you address this. We found that the fact that the midwifery, speech and language and Jobcentre Plus teams provide some services at The Harbour is very helpful to you and is assisting the professionals who work in these services to support you better. As a result, you and your children receive exceptionally good guidance and support. Outreach and family support work is a significant strength as staff are really good at helping families who are having difficulties. Good attention has been given to meeting the needs of those of you who live in Marchwood through liaison with army welfare and the activities available at The Mulberry Centre.

Centre staff work hard to ensure that you and your children are well cared for at the centre and they give you lots of excellent advice on how to keep your families safe and healthy. Families and children really enjoy the activity sessions, such as 'Active Tots', the healthy snacks and cookery sessions provided. You have an excellent

awareness of how to keep your families safe. In particular, we found the training provided to help you resuscitate children and prevent drowning to be especially good. Very good advice and support is provided for behaviour management during centre activities and we found children behaved well. Safeguarding arrangements are good, especially so for children who might be at risk, and staff are constantly vigilant as to your own and your children's safety.

The playworker and other staff organise activities that support your children's learning and play. Children really enjoy these and are keen to learn new things. Activities to support children's health and safety are good. However, staff do not formally assess how well your children are developing new skills. As a result, it is difficult for them to evaluate how well they are promoting children's development and to extend this further. This is the main reason why achievement in some important aspects related to the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. We have asked the centre to improve this aspect.

A good range of courses are provided for those of you who would like more training on how to help your children, for example on baby massage or oral health. Centre staff also work closely with Jobcentre Plus and other organisations to help you attend courses that you feel will support you in the future.

The centre is well run and staff work exceptionally well together as a team. They are continually looking for ways to make the centre even better. You are very good at telling centre staff how well you think the different activities and services you use are helping you and your families. Staff use this information well to make improvements so that the activities provided meet your needs more effectively. However, they do not yet have sufficient data to give a comprehensive picture of the specific features that are benefitting your families. To aid staff in their development work, we have asked them to put in place a better system for judging the full effect activities and services are having on you and your children.

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