

# Inspection report for Crownlands Children's Centre

---

<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	365669
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alex Baxter

<b>Centre governance</b>	Plymouth City Council
<b>Centre leader</b>	Claire Devereux
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	This is the centre's first inspection
<b>Centre address</b>	Austin Farm School, Delamere Road, Eggbuckland, Plymouth, PL6 5XQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 770321
<b>Fax number</b>	N/A
<b>Email address</b>	crownlands@plymouth.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Austin Farm Primary School 113302
<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.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as this 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)

**Published:** July 2011



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2011



## 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

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at 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 representatives of the centre's advisory board, the local authority and the senior management and leadership team. Other partnership agencies linking with and visiting the centre and members of the staff and users of the centre were also consulted.

The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

## Information about the centre

Crownlands Children's Centre is a phase 2 local authority run children's centre based within the grounds of Austin Farm Primary School. It opened in 2008 as part of the local Sure Start programme. Initially it was linked with Plymbridge Nursery. In April 2010 it became a Plymouth City Council children's centre in a close partnership with The D.E.L.L Children's Centre. The manager shares her duties across both centres, with each centre also served by a deputy manager. Governance arrangements also include an Advisory Board made up of members of the community and partner groups.

Crownlands Children's Centre reach area is one of the smallest within the Plymouth children's centres boundaries. The range of neighbourhoods it serves reflects a broadly average level of social and economic disadvantage as seen in the average percentages of children entitled to free school meals or families with the main wage earner out of work. However, the immediate area surrounding the centre has a

higher level of deprivation as seen in the number of families with low incomes and requiring benefits.

The area served by the community is made up predominantly of families from a White British background. Although there is a below average number of families from minority ethnic groups, there is an increasing number of families from mainly White European backgrounds, where English not the first language. Children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage provision vary, but are generally below those expected for their age, especially in communication and language.

The centre comprises of an open plan team office/reception area, a small management/consulting room and an activity room. In addition, the centre has a small, secure outdoor area and, on occasion, has use of some of the facilities within the adjacent primary school. The centre also utilises community venues within its reach area to deliver children's centre services. These currently include St Edwards Primary School and Egguckland village hall.

Through its various partnerships, the centre delivers the full core offer, including health, maternity and outreach services. Crownlands also offers a range of additional services, including parenting advice and a variety of toddler and baby support groups, and often provides crèche support for parents attending the centre.

This inspection took account of the inspection findings from the concurrent section 5 inspection of Austin Farm Primary School and of the findings of the 22 September 2010 inspection of The D.E.L.L. Children's Centre.

## 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

Crownlands is a good setting that despite its small size is committed to reaching out to all the families in its community. Following the establishment of its close partnership last year with The D.E.L.L. Children's Centre, nearby, it continues to improve under the guidance of a strong leadership team. Together, they are using their breadth of expertise and widening partnerships with other services and schools to ensure that good self-evaluation leads to improvements in the quality of the services they provide. For example, by locating activities at other venues, the centre

has increased the number of families engaging with its services. As a result, the positive outcomes families derive, such as the good progress made and great enjoyment experienced by parents and their children, show a good capacity for sustained improvement.

The centre has good arrangements for safeguarding all users. Parents say they feel safe and are confident that their children are safe and well cared for whilst attending activities. Information and training, both at the centre and at other locations and through outreach support in the home, have helped parents and carers to raise their awareness and to maintain a safer environment for their children. Referral procedures are particularly rigorous and the centre works effectively with key agencies to monitor domestic violence and reduce the risk of harm to children.

Parents and their children respond eagerly to the support they receive. This inspection shows that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in their learning and development. Parents talk appreciatively about the help they receive from very considerate staff. Users' views also show that parents and their families achieve similarly well. For example, the pleasure and benefits, especially in developing self-confidence and great enjoyment gained from happy experiences and new friendships, were clearly evident in the Stay and Play, crèche and post-natal sessions observed. Whilst children generally learn well, especially in their personal development, at times staff do not use assessments precisely enough to make sure that activities build well on their previous learning. This slows the progress of some children, for example in extending their speaking and listening skills.

Given its limited accommodation, the centre's services can only be provided to small groups. However, this is facilitating a genuine closeness in the community ethos promoted during activities. The promotion of equality and diversity is central to this ethos. As evident throughout its policies and in the warmth of relationships, effective inclusion is clearly seen in the increasing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds, recently from Eastern Europe, who are engaging with, and welcomed into, the centre's activities.

Users' views expressed individually, and in confidence, for example, in their regularly completed evaluations at the end of activities or during one-to-one discussions with staff, provide clear information of where services need to be directed or improved. These views are considered diligently by staff to inform future development. The centre's recent restructuring of its Advisory Group reflects its determination to serve its community as effectively as possible. Whilst not yet fulfilled, the re-forming of the Parent Development Group, so that it is more representative of its local community, also shows a continuing effort to accurately review the impact of provision and be able to take effective steps to improve it.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Complete the re-constituting of the parents' group as a Parent Development Board specific to Crownlands so that parents are more fully involved in the governance of the centre.
- Make more effective use of assessments of children's achievements during the centre's activities to inform planning and to promote even better individualised learning.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
---

The centre's role in the life of the community is good and improving. New mothers speak very appreciatively of the uplifting guidance and care that they receive during and following childbirth. They talk openly during the reassuring 'Great Expectations' ante-natal and 'Mini Gems Stay and Play' sessions, which clearly show that the healthy outcomes for young children and parents are good and improving. Data and parental responses in a recent telephone survey also show that partnership working with health services, for example through the 'Latch On' breast feeding support, are bringing a good improvement in breastfeeding in the area served by the centre. As one parent said, 'It's always great having other ideas and advice about special problems.'

'Snack Time' is another children's centre activity which promotes healthy lifestyles. At every snack time there is an informal element of adult education delivered by centre staff, who are fully qualified in food hygiene. As a result, parents are supported and children are nourished well. Children attending the child-minding sessions at the centre and at other locations enjoy practical activity both indoors and outside. They make good gains in adopting healthy lifestyles, but data show that more could be done to reduce childhood obesity in the area.

Good safeguarding procedures and very supportive pastoral care from staff help children feel safe as they attend or experience the range of children's centre activities. All staff are diligent in identifying and tackling children's welfare needs at an early stage. Such early intervention, for example by outreach workers and health visitors who visit the family home, is informed well by detailed assessments of children and family needs. There is particularly good evidence of improved outcomes for children considered at risk, including those on child protection plans and involved with Common Assessment Framework processes and looked after children. Other children, including those with complex needs, are also helped to feel and stay safe. Parents, especially those experiencing difficulties in their lives, also feel safe as a result of warm and friendly relationships with staff. The specific help parents receive in improving parenting skills including, for example, during the one-to-one confidential discussions also raise confidence and feelings of well-being.

Inspection findings clearly show that children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, behave and achieve well. Parents and their children greatly enjoy their learning and make good progress in developing the skills that will help them in the future. Parents willingly express their ideas and views and these contribute particularly well to decision making at the centre. The increased number of play sessions, such as 'Little Chatterbox', reflects the staff's positive response to parents' suggestions and needs. Consequently, outcomes for users are good, especially parenting skills. Staff are very supportive and friendly and promote good gains in children's personal and social development. However, the children's communication skills are not as advanced.

User responses and children's centre evaluations show that families are helped to make good progress in managing their economic well-being. For example, records of the support given to families in crisis often include specific help in accessing services, benefits and handling money. Parents appreciate the guidance they receive from a variety of courses, including first aid and home safety. Although unemployment in the Crownlands area is much lower in relation to other areas served by children's centres, strengthening partnerships, for example with Job Centre Plus, are developing more courses to aid families in their pursuit of further qualifications and job opportunities. Mothers also appreciate the 'drop-in' nature of some of the activities. For example, the 'Stay and Play' sessions at St Edwards Primary School and Egguckland village hall enable them to socialise and network with other parents, helping each other to tackle their concerns more effectively.

<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, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</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 and employment</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**2**

Crownlands has well-formulated and sensitive systems for assessing the needs of children, parents and other users. In particular, the diligence of staff in seeking users' views ensures that the centre has an accurate understanding of the needs of children and families and can adapt support accordingly. Outreach staff work closely

with parents to make sure that the services or support that they are offered are matched well to their needs. This may include one-to-one support to tackle post-natal depression or lead to home safety checks and guidance to increase parenting skills. Staff are careful to evaluate the impact of their assistance and particularly effective in establishing very positive relationships. As one parent stated, typically reflecting the views of others, 'Crowlands has made a huge difference to my life.' Staff are also skilful in dealing with cases of children and families assessed under the Common Assessment Framework. Monitoring procedures and record keeping are very thorough and needs and actions are kept under continuous review.

Users are signposted to the centre's services by a range of partner groups, through day-to-day contact amongst families and by regular advertisements and flyers. More individual referrals of families with specific needs also come from a variety of sources, including health workers, midwives, other education settings and social services. Families are particularly welcomed when arriving of their own volition to seek support. The range of activities available for children attending the centre enables them to make good progress in their skills and knowledge across all the areas of learning.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early through the work of the outreach team and health visitors who, in partnership with other centre staff, ensure that children's needs are met. The services provided promote good learning and development for all users, including for parents in extending their parenting skills. However, at times, staff do not use assessments of the children's learning precisely enough to inform future learning activities, especially to enhance further speaking and listening skills. Even so, there is particularly good enhancement in users' self-confidence and enjoyment, equally for children and their parents and especially for an increasing number of vulnerable families.

A range of targeted activities, provided directly by the staff of the centre and other service providers, offers users opportunities to attend sessions to support their children and to improve their own skills, access services and socialise with other parents. For example, the 'Little Chatterbox' sessions led by the centre staff and health visitor are used to advise and support on a number of health issues such as sleeping, weaning and other aspects of child development. Satisfaction rates with the services on offer are high and sessions are well attended. The staff do their best to support users, for example through one-to-one sessions. Crowlands provides confidential support to members of local families who may be vulnerable to domestic abuse. The way that staff are quick to provide crèche facilities to promote such personal attention is a particular strength. However, as there is a limited amount of space and facilities at Crowlands, staff are expanding the services they provide at other venues in the area. For example, 'Stay and Play' and 'Jumping Jacks' sessions, designed to improve the physical well-being of children, are also held at other venues within the locality.

The centre also provides services that are carefully targeted to provide good care and support for particular groups. For example, there is a six-week structured ante-



natal programme in partnership with the local midwife, health visitor, the Stop Smoking Service and the Family Information Service. Other courses include a breast feeding support group in partnership with the local Primary Care Trust. Evaluations completed by the staff and data presented by the local authority show the good impact of services in reducing, for example, smoking during pregnancy and childhood obesity for children under five years of age. Staff are constantly seeking ways of reaching out to those families who may not be accessing the centre's services. For example, the increasing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds now participating in the centre's activities shows some success in signposting what the centre has to offer.

<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>2</b>

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

**2**

Leaders at all levels make every effort to reach out to the community and are effective in tailoring services to meet users' needs, so improvement continues and good value for money is secured. Improving partnerships with other services, such as health workers and Job Centre Plus staff, are reflected in the positive views and increased confidence of users. The centre's recent reforming of the Advisory Group so that it is more representative of, and better placed to serve, the immediate needs of the local community shows a clear link between strategic planning and service provision.

Although not yet completed, the similar change to create a Crownlands Parent Development Group shows an equal commitment to sustain effective accountability arrangements. In the meantime, the close partnership with The D.E.L.L. Children's Centre, strong support from the local authority and well-established questionnaires for gathering users' views underpin good governance. Continuing teamwork and sharing of expertise by leaders across both children's centres and increasing use of venues across the community to extend the centre's reach, further show the good use of self-evaluation and development planning to identify and target relevant priorities. Consequently, outcomes are generally good and continue to improve.

Other strengths of leadership and management include the empowering work of the manager who shares her duties across both centres and the way she works effectively with the deputy leaders of Crownlands and The D.E.L.L. This has been clearly evident over the past year in making sure that the good outcomes gained by

the centre's services have been accurately evaluated to secure its future during the recent in-house tender process of the local authority.

The centre has an inclusive, caring ethos. Effective action to promote greater equality has resulted in good improvement in the engagement of families from minority ethnic groups. Relationships are very re-assuring, all are treated with respect and parents feel very well supported. Resources, including staff and books in the centre's library, which are shared with the closely-located privately-run nursery, reflect the diversity in the community. Staff work hard to make sure that families and their children feel part of a community and learn to show respect for themselves and others, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the achievement gap is narrowing.

Safeguarding arrangements are secure and all statutory requirements, including child protection procedures, risk assessments of the centre's facilities and activities and regular staff training, are fully met. Close teamwork between the staff of both centres ensures that all the statutory checks on staff, visiting agency colleagues and volunteers, including Criminal Records Bureau checks are fully completed and kept up to date. All partners working at the centre or collaborating with centre staff in providing outreach support to families, for example in dealing with domestic violence, are fully conversant with agreed procedures and safeguard users' and staff emotional health and well-being.

<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>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>2</b>

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

This inspection took account of the children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage and the proportion of children eligible for free school meals evident in the inspection findings of the concurrent section 5 inspection of Austin Farm Primary School and of the governance and partnership arrangements outlined in the 22 September 2010 inspection of The D.E.L.L. Children's Centre.

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 Crownlands Children's Centre on 29 and 30 June 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 the centre lies at the heart of its community, which by developing increasingly effective links with schools and other service providers, is improving well and is already skilled at adapting its services to meet the needs of the families it serves.

The creation of a strong leadership team, strengthened by its very close partnership with The D. E. L.L. Children's Centre, nearby, last September significantly increased the staff expertise. Over the past year, through close teamwork and good support from the local authority, leaders have extended the range of service opportunities even more. This increased capability has systematically increased the number of families served by the centre, notably, for example, by developing more support for babies at the 'Stay and Play' venues such as Egguckland village hall. Staff are aware that parents would like more 'drop-in' opportunities for support and contact and so they continue to seek other venues so that services can be located as close to families as possible. Overall, this track record of good provision and outcomes and the continuing determination to increase services show that Crownlands has a good capacity to improve in the future.

We found that the centre does everything it can to welcome you and to make you aware of the services it offers. We agree with you that staff implement good procedures to keep you and your children safe when you visit the centre and its outreach locations. We also agree with you that the staff, whether at the centre or other locations or when visiting you at home, all treat you with respect and promote warm relationships.

Although the creation of a new Crownlands Parent Development Group purely to serve Crownlands has yet to be completed, we were impressed by the very good contributions of parents through their regular completion of evaluations at the end of the programme of activities that they attend. Parents' comments and suggestions are helping the centre to improve services and support more vulnerable families. Most of all they show that parents feel that their children make good progress and especially that they too gain confidence and develop friendships, which help them to enjoy family life more. Our evaluations and observations of sessions at the centre, for example 'Mini Gems Stay and Play', and the 'Pram to Primary Support Group' and its crèche, reflect parents' views and those of the staff, namely, that children make good progress and experience great enjoyment during the centre's various activities. Similarly, parental responses in a recent telephone survey and in our interviews all reflect the positive impact this support has in helping those who participate to become better parents.

To develop further the work of the centre, we have asked the centre manager and members of the Advisory Board to continue their efforts to more formally include parents and their views in the governance of the centre by creating the new Crownlands Parent Development Group. We have also asked the staff of the centre to make better use of their assessments of children's learning during activities at the centre, to plan and support future learning experiences and to quicken children's progress, for example in speaking and listening.

We would like to thank you for allowing us to join with you during some of your sessions and additional thanks to those of you who spared the time to tell how much you appreciate the support you receive and to offer suggestions about how it might improve.

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