

# Inspection report for Buckland Sure Start Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Portsmouth City Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	367766
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7 and 8 July 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steve Nelson

<b>Centre governance</b>	Portsmouth City Council
<b>Centre leader</b>	Edwina Brennan
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	n/a
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	The Haven Nursery

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

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**Published: July 2011**



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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 children's centre manager, the senior leadership team and the Chair Governors. They met with a number of representatives of services who work through the children's centre, including the leader of health promotion, health visitors and the outreach worker. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection judgements

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

### Information about the centre

Buckland Sure Start Children's Centre is a phase one children's centre which provides full core offer provision. This includes: early education integrated with childcare, family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services and adult education. It operates in two areas, Buckland and Landport, from two sites; the main children's centre site is Buckland. The satellite is the Landport Sure Start Centre. There is a partnership agreement with The Haven Nursery. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a range of skills at levels lower than those expected for their age.

The area manager for the Heart of Portsmouth, who is also the head of the centre, is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre and has a full role in strategic planning. The local authority funds the centre. The Heart of Portsmouth Partnership Board consists of the Early Support Commissioning Manager, parent representatives, the Clinical Team Leader of the West Children and Families Team, a headteacher, a social worker and representatives from the voluntary sector.

The majority of the families who use the centre are of White British heritage. The area's ethnic mix is very dynamic, but the Bangladeshi community is still significant and there are a growing number of families using the centre that are of African heritage. Data for the reach area place the user base in the bottom 20% nationally for deprivation. The children's centre has 1,200 children under five in its reach area. About 82% of children and adults who use the centre come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no one is in work.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes local community baby clinics, child development checks, breast-feeding support and special needs support groups. The centre has links with health visitors and speech therapists. It provides a range of adult education and courses and activities, designed to support parents and carers back into employment. The centre opens 51 weeks each year on weekdays from 8am until 5pm (4.30pm on Fridays).

## 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

Buckland Sure Start Children's Centre and its Landport satellite centre are welcoming places to visit and serve the families that live in their reach area well. A typical view expressed by a user is, 'Staff are very welcoming and are always there to help.' The centre manager and programme manager of the centres provide strong leadership. Together they exhibit good organisational and communication skills and value the work of everyone. As a result, the centres run effectively on a day-to-day basis. Staff morale is high. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent. Many parents and carers were keen to speak to inspectors about how the centre has helped them, especially in developing parenting skills, assisting them in moments of crisis and accessing support they may need through partner agencies, such as the health service.

The centres' staff have a clear sense of drive and passion and a good understanding of the difficulties they face in the reach area they serve. As a result, users are supported well. Partnerships with the local community and other agencies are good. Regular partnership meetings are arranged, which ensures services are integrated and deliver cohesive provision for users which impacts positively on their lives. The centre manager acknowledges the centre's need to have a closer working relationship with Jobcentre Plus in order to further help adults move into employment.

The centres offer a broad range of services and activities which effectively meet the needs of most users throughout the reach. External speakers invited to centre sessions provide good advice and guidance. Specialist staff are often used to deliver services, ensuring good learning takes place. Data collected by the centre indicate there is good take-up of services by those living in the centres' reach area.

Good governance allows the centre manager and her team the independence to get on and do things. The Heart of Portsmouth Partnership Board also provide challenge and support for leaders and managers to improve provision. Rigorous self-evaluation takes account of the views of centre users and partners. This leads to accurate identification of priorities for improvement.

Outstanding prioritisation of safeguarding ensures all users are safe. The number of users accessing this good quality provision has increased during the past two years. However, targeted outreach work is required to encourage more ethnic minority families to use the centres' facilities. The accurate self-evaluation, strong teamwork

of staff and high levels of commitment by all stakeholders, contribute to increased outcomes for users demonstrating the centres' good capacity to sustain improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Create a stronger partnership with Jobcentre Plus, by working more closely with it to increase opportunities for adults to return to work.
- Increase the centre's outreach work to engage more effectively with ethnic minority groups, in order to encourage them to use the centre's services.

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

<b>2</b>
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Parents and carers develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. They are confident about making healthy lunches and packed food during healthy eating sessions at the centres. Children are encouraged to eat fresh fruit during all centres' activities. Children develop good hygiene habits through clear routines such as washing hands for snacks and cleaning their teeth. The centres have been successful in supporting mothers who were experiencing difficulties in continuing to breastfeed. Immunisation rates are high and smoking cessation sessions are having a positive impact on users. Emotional well-being is an important aspect of the centres' work. They work well with the health service to provide effective support for users' feelings of isolation. One parent said, 'I don't know what I would have done without all the help staff gave me through my depression; my children would have really suffered.' The Little Minds Matter group has been successful in helping parents understand children's emotional health and well-being.

Adults are confident to approach the centres with concerns about family and community issues. Parents and carers who are experiencing stressful situations trust the children's centres to continue to work with them to improve their family situation. Case studies show very effective impact and improved well-being and welfare for children on child protection plans. Robust assessments and systems are in place to support and ensure the safety of vulnerable children and any adult in need. Staff supervise children well throughout the day. They ensure that parents develop good observation skills in supervising their children. Children and adults behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others; for example, adults locking gates to safeguard children. Children help tidy away the toys in the play areas. They show an increasing awareness of the importance of risk assessing situations and use of equipment themselves.

Users express verbally and through the written evaluations that they very much

enjoy the activities offered. The centres are taking effective action to identify and narrow the achievement gap. Children's progress is good and most make progress in line with or above expectations, given their abilities and starting points. The services offered by the centres are popular and groups have high levels of attendance. Parents attending the activities for babies such as the Baby Steps group, agree that it has had a positive impact on their child's development and social skills. Volunteer assistants are well qualified and they know their key group of children well. They identify gaps in children's learning and achievement and take appropriate steps to narrow these. Children are well prepared for transition into nursery.

Users make positive contributions to the community. Through the parents' and carers' forum, users have opportunities to express their views and are engaged in the governance of the centres. Adults who attend centres value them as a place to meet and to seek help if they need it. They regularly participate in fund raising events for charities. Children's behaviour is good and they form positive relationships within the centres. Courses delivered by the Homestart team support parents and carers to understand positive behaviour management strategies. Parents attending the courses report they have greater success in managing their children's challenging behaviour and in promoting positive behaviour.

Children make good progress in developing skills for the future. Outcomes for children, parents and other users are good and increasing. Children improve their literacy and social skills well. Parents and carers are encouraged to identify and work towards their aspirations. For example, increasing numbers of adults are taking part in the centres' volunteer programme. They gain accredited qualifications, such as paediatric first aid and safeguarding qualifications. Most have progressed on to volunteer and paid work in centres. Adults are developing a good range of job preparation skills by practising for interview and effective curriculum vitae writing, thorough participation in the Next Step programme.

These are the grades for the outcomes for 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>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
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The centres work effectively with other agencies to ensure assessments, such as those carried out for children with special education needs and/or disabilities, are robust and well informed. For example Individual assessment of children's need results in individual programmes of support. These are regularly monitored in partnership with parents. Case studies show that they result in marked improvements in children's learning and development especially in language and social skills. The centres are developing their use of assessment information to provide appropriate programmes for the needs of diverse adult groups.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the centres and linked nursery are good. Children behave well and follow staff instructions. They are provided with a good range of activities and learning opportunities from birth, which effectively supports their development. The centres promote purposeful learning well. For example, a parent said the play workshop was 'a great way to learn singing counting songs that is quickly developing my child's numeracy skills'. Good quality resources that are age-appropriate and interesting encourage children's engagement well. Both centres are particularly good at recognising users' personal development and achievements through celebrations of work produced by children and families. Increasing numbers of parents are attending college courses. They are achieving recognised literacy and numeracy qualifications, improving their self-esteem and life skills.

The centres offer a broad range of services and activities. Families particularly appreciate the fun days. The Dads' Day at the linked nursery includes painting and football and was described as 'an opportunity to meet other dads and find great ways to play and learn for both children and adults'. Outreach services provide effective advice and guidance, such as home sessions about 'cooking on a budget' delivered through effective partnership working with the Health Improvement Service. Specialist staff are used often to deliver services such as advising and promoting sexual health. The English for speakers of other languages course, delivered in centres, is meeting the needs of the increasing number of non-English speaking families. Users informed inspectors they would like more outdoor garden space for children to play and activities for families at weekends.

Care, guidance and support arrangements are effective. Good tailored support develops families' well-being. Families express high levels of satisfaction with the level of care, guidance and support offered by centres. The open-door policy provides a listening ear to support children and families all year round. A parent who was feeling down and depressed and has benefited greatly from the support and social interaction at the centres said, 'My lasting memories of the support I received, are the helpful lovely people who were there for me and my family.' Good quality partnership working ensures support for children and families is good. Speech and language specialist support provided at centres has been effective in consistently moving referrals off support.



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>2</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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Governance and accountability arrangements provide effective supervision of the centres' activities. Improvement plans and priorities are clearly identified. Morale is high and belief in the centres' success is evident at all levels. The senior leadership team and managers consistently communicate high expectations to staff about securing improvement. Priorities within the development plan are sufficiently adaptive to meet changing user needs. The centres' actions to promote greater equality for different groups are effective in removing barriers, especially for children and families with special education needs and/or disabilities. They have identified where further improvements can be made to overcome any variations in outcomes and have good strategies to overcome them.

Highly effective prioritisation of safeguarding ensures all users are safe. The Criminal Records Bureau checks are very well maintained and accurate. Very robust procedures are in place with regard to suitability checks for new workers, and stringent safe recruitment procedures are implemented. Thorough risk assessments are in place; particularly, the centres' extended vetting of the safeguarding arrangements of its partner organisations. Very effective multi-agency working ensures children and adults are fully protected and safeguarded. In particular, the centres' early intervention to support the emotional health and well-being of users, including dealing with domestic violence, is highly effective. Excellent early intervention procedures and referral mechanisms ensure that concerns are followed up and support, where needed, is offered. The centres are a lead provider of multi-agency training delivering Level 4 qualifications in the Portsmouth area. All staff are fully trained in child protection to levels that are appropriate to their responsibilities. This extends to all volunteers who are required to complete an accredited safeguarding qualification. All staff are well aware of a range of procedures relating to child protection issues. They have excellent knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The centres have effective partnership working with a range of services which meet the needs of most users well. Family support workers have been successful in building some families' confidence to attend the centres. For example, a parent said, 'My volunteer has given me so much confidence in myself. My husband and I share

the parenting between us a lot more.’ Although the centres have developed good links with agencies to help support adults into sustainable employment, they recognise the need to develop a closer working relationship with Jobcentre Plus. The links with health partners has been successful in helping those mothers suffering from post-natal depression to overcome it. Outreach services are improving and targeting identified needs in the wider community. The centres’ engagement with ethnic minority groups is not fully developed to sufficiently involve them in the centres’ activities. The improvement in the centres’ impact on the community in consistently increasing outcomes and good quality provision means that the centres’ resources are managed effectively. They represent 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>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>3</b>

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

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Buckland Sure Start Children's Centre and the satellite Landport Sure Start Children's Children's Centre on 7 and 8 July 2011. We judged the centres as good overall.

We are very grateful to all the parents, carers and representatives from the centres' professional partners who took the trouble to come and tell us about the work they do. You gave us a very positive picture of the centres, and what you said was very useful in making our final judgments.

At the core of the centres' success are the strong leadership provided by the centres' manager, the effective governance, the very good teamwork of the centres' staff and its effective relationship with professional partners. This means that the workers at the centres communicate well with each other and their feedback provides a good knowledge and understanding of the community's needs.

Those of you who use the centres are much better now at staying safe and healthy and looking after your families. We know this because many of you told us of what you had learnt. We agree with you; the centres are very welcoming places to come to. Staff have worked hard to make them very safe for you and your children. The centres are very good at working closely with other agencies, such as the health service and social services, particularly to help vulnerable children and families.

Parents, carers and children are benefiting from the good provision provided by the children's centres. Some of you are keen to attend classes to improve your skills. These must be enjoyable because we noticed that attendance on these courses is high. Good quality sessions are prepared for you to improve your parenting skills and for your children to develop basic skills. This means that you gain more confidence and expertise and your children are well prepared when they start nursery school.

We have found a few areas that require improvement and the centres' managers are already aware of these. We are recommending that managers work more closely with Jobcentre Plus, to further help those of you who are ready to enter employment find suitable jobs. We are also asking managers to increase the number of users using the centres' services from ethnic minority groups.

We wish you every success for the future.

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