

# Inspection report for Windmill Hill Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	384223
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 July 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Rodgers HMI

<b>Centre governance</b>	4Children
<b>Centre leader</b>	Betty Dobson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	None
<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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's coordinator, staff who work directly with children and families, representatives from the advisory board, 4Children, the local authority and some of the centre's partners.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Windmill Hill Children's Centre is located in a building within a housing estate in the garrison town of Tidworth, Wiltshire. The centre is relatively small in size comprising a playroom, multi-purpose/sensory room and reception area. The centre is a phase two children's centre and received its designation in May 2009. Outreach activities are provided at two local primary schools, in Tidworth and Ludgershall.

The local authority commissions 4Children, a national voluntary sector organisation, to have overall responsibility for the centre. There is an advisory board that includes parents and representatives from voluntary and private sector organisations, a local school, pre school, army welfare and health services. The children's centre coordinator manages a team of one outreach worker and four support staff.

The centre serves an area in the east of Wiltshire, close to the Hampshire border, which has 1,435 children aged five and under. Most of the families in the reach area live in Tidworth and approximately 75% of children are from military families. Tidworth has a high proportion of young residents and women who are parenting alone due to the father being posted away from home. Although unemployment is relatively low in the reach area, the mainly civilian area of Ludgershall has pockets where there are high levels of children in workless households. Unemployment is higher for those aged 18 to 24 than overall in Great Britain. The area of Collingbourne is very rural and families tend to be very dispersed across a large

geographical area. Although the majority of local families in the reach area are of White British heritage, a higher proportion of children are from Black and minority ethnic heritage groups when compared with Wiltshire. The area has very few looked after children and Traveller families. Tidworth falls within the top 70% most deprived areas in the country.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Windmill Hill is a satisfactory children's centre that is adequately managed. The centre coordinator uses data about the local area effectively to prioritise the activities and services offered at the centre. This has resulted in provision being increased in the area of Ludgershall and sessions being aimed at specific age ranges. The centre coordinator recognises which geographical areas and groups are under-represented and has a clear action plan to address this. However, some targets in the action plan are not sufficiently measurable and this means the goals, and progress towards achieving them, cannot be monitored easily.

The centre has good partnerships with health professionals, who work with staff to promote a seamless service for families. The centre has developed good health and well-being sessions and activities. Staff are well informed about issues affecting a healthy lifestyle and use their knowledge well to target support, particularly for healthy eating. The breastfeeding support group is contributing well to the increasing number of women who are breastfeeding in the area.

Safeguarding is satisfactorily managed and 4Children has thorough procedures and systems. The centre promotes safeguarding effectively through visually stimulating posters, leaflets and providing equipment to increase safety in the home. More recently, systems for identifying and supporting children at risk have been improved and are satisfactory. Arrangements for ensuring the safety of the centre's users are generally adequate, although children using the outdoor play area are not always sufficiently supervised. Staff have recognised this issue in a risk assessment but have not followed this up to see if the actions they introduced are effective.

Parents and children enjoy using the centre. Children develop effective social skills and improve their behaviour. Staff encourage children to develop their speaking and language skills by planning singing and rhymes into sessions. The outreach worker models communication skills effectively with parents. Many parents find the ideas and tips they gain from sessions they attend are useful at home.

Too few of the centre's parents are volunteers or are taking additional qualifications to help them progress into further education, training or employment. The centre's partnerships with organisations that provide help with work and training are under-developed.

Staff carefully plan their sessions to incorporate topics that parents have identified as being useful. Activities at the centre are purposeful and varied. Staff promote equality and diversity well within sessions and activities. They are effective in reducing barriers to accessing the current provision, and take up within the reach area is satisfactory. Generally, the range of activities and sessions is satisfactory, although the centre does not offer regular outdoor sporting activities.

Parents are given good quality information and support. Staff very sensitively introduce parenting advice. They effectively improve parents' lives through providing help with welfare and childcare, referring them to external organisations and partners where appropriate.

The centre has a well-established and enthusiastic advisory board. However, attendance at meetings is sometimes sporadic and its members do not sufficiently challenge decisions, actions or the strategic direction. Some of the centre users are not clear about who represents them on the advisory board or their role.

The centre coordinator uses data and staff and partners' views well towards the self-evaluation. As a result of this, the centre's strengths and areas for improvement have been accurately identified. Some groups of parents have recently given their views about what could be improved, which the centre coordinator is starting to use in planning the programme of activities. However, systems for gathering the views of all users, and those not accessing the centre, to inform improvement are not sufficiently formal or regular. The centre's effective self-evaluation, action plan and the way the centre listens to its users demonstrate that the capacity for future improvement is satisfactory.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with the advisory board to enable the members to provide more effective governance in challenging the work of the centre, setting the strategic direction and attending meetings more consistently.
- Make better use of the views of parents to shape the services and activities by:
  - more systematically collating, analysing and using evaluations of sessions

- raising awareness of the parents on the advisory board so the centre's users know who is representing them, how to access them and their role
- reinstating the annual questionnaire to enable all the centre's users to give their views and providing trend analysis
- telling users how their views have been used, the changes that have been made and where this has not been possible the reasons why.
- Follow up health and safety risk assessments, particularly those that have high risk activities or locations, to monitor the effectiveness of actions identified to minimise risk and revise these where appropriate.
- Increase the opportunities for parents to develop their employability skills by:
  - identifying and promoting broader volunteering opportunities for parents
  - reviewing the range of adult learning courses in the area to provide parents with suitable information and identify gaps where their needs are not being met
  - developing stronger links with training and employment partners, including Jobcentre Plus and training providers.
- Increase participation from across the whole reach area by:
  - further promoting the service with partners and local organisations
  - finding out what those not using the centre would like
  - providing more opportunities for physical challenge outdoors.

## How good are outcomes for users?

3
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The centre offers good activities and support groups to improve the health and well-being of parents and children. Peer support groups in breastfeeding are particularly effective and have helped to increase significantly the proportion of mothers who are breastfeeding. Staff promote healthy eating well and two designated staff provide good advice for parents on issues like portion control. The proportion of children from the reach area who are obese in the Reception Year of school has fallen and is now lower than the rate across Wiltshire. Staff have strong partnerships with health professionals and communicate well with midwives and health visitors to provide a seamless service to users. Staff are well informed about a range of health issues and support people who are facing challenges, including isolation and depression, well.

Parents and their children enjoy attending the centre. Staff promote speech and language effectively through planning for singing and rhymes in their session focusing on the needs of parents and their children. The outreach worker uses role modelling well to demonstrate how parents should speak to their children. The achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved over the last year, but is still below the Wiltshire average.

The centre provides parents with safety gates and information to help them improve safety in the home. In the last five months, the systems for identifying, recording and responding to children at risk, including using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), have been strengthened and are satisfactory. The outreach

worker is working effectively with health professionals to share expertise and improve children's safety. Parents feel safe at the centre. Staff routinely risk assess the centre's activities, buildings and space used. They appropriately identify aspects that are high risk and actions to minimise risk, but do not follow this up to see if the risk has reduced to an acceptable level. Staff do not sufficiently ensure that children playing in the outdoor area are adequately supervised by parents.

Children develop effective social skills through attending sessions. They benefit from being with children their own age and mimic good behaviour. One parent commented, 'I am much more confident with my child and she seems a lot happier.' In the mixed age range activities, younger children are motivated to develop physically, for example to start crawling and walking, but provision for older children's skills development is not always sufficiently challenging. Staff treat parents and children with respect and seek their views regularly, often informally, when planning sessions. More recently, the centre coordinator has introduced say and play sessions to gather the views of parents.

Although the centre signposts parents to a range of organisations providing employment opportunities, careers advice and guidance and training, this has limited impact. Very few parents take up of courses that develop adult skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Staff have a mixed awareness of programmes that training providers are delivering locally or where there might be gaps of unmet need. Only one parent is currently volunteering, however they are finding the experience very useful. These issues have been identified as key areas for development by the centre coordinator, but action to address this is at an early stage.

<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>3</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>3</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>3</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**3**

The centre coordinator uses a wide range of data to assess the needs of the reach area and direct the available resources to areas with the highest level of deprivation and identified issues. In particular, this has helped the centre to increase the

sessions being offered within Ludgershall and define the age ranges to meet local need. Staff know the centre's users well and are continuously discussing their needs with them to adapt their sessions. The outreach worker very successfully discusses parents' individual needs and runs sessions for them at home if they do not want to visit the centre. 4Children has specific staff to lead on identified groups that are under-represented or whose needs are not yet being met, for example, fathers and victims of domestic violence.

The centre's activities and sessions are satisfactorily planned and linked to the development of children's speech and language skills. Individual staff take great care to discuss potential topics with their groups and incorporate these into their sessions. Parents and children take part in stimulating and varied activities. Parents often continue using these at home, for example using the songs from the baby babble sessions. Parents find the tips they are given at the end of some sessions useful. They are encouraged to review their child's progress at the end of each six week group of sessions and reflect on achievements. However, parents are insufficiently clear about how to complete the evaluations and some are less effective in celebrating children's success.

The centre is very good at attracting military families. Many welcome the help this gives them in overcoming feelings of isolation. Much of the provision is targeted at children under the age of two and their parents, and take up of pre-school places is high. Centre staff work well with their partners to facilitate and set up support groups for parents. Parents appreciate, and make good use of, the multi-purpose/sensory room. One parent said, 'I love the sensory room, it is such a calm place.' Although an adequate range of sessions are offered, not many promote outdoor or physical activity. The centre's programme has recently been changed and some parents are uncertain about the revised age ranges or what they can progress onto once their child is over the age of two. The centre is attracting more teenage and young parents to its main sessions, but the targeted support group, run in conjunction with partners, is poorly attended. Currently, the centre is not offering activities in the areas of Collingbourne and Perham Down, although the centre coordinator is reviewing this.

Staff make good use of their qualifications and experience to provide effective information and support. They are very sensitive to the needs of individual parents when discussing how they can improve their parenting skills. Typical comments from parents were, 'Staff give good advice in a non threatening way,' and, 'Staff provide an incredibly useful and valuable service.' Many staff members are from military families and demonstrate empathy for the specific needs and tensions facing parents and their children. The outreach worker provides very effective support and guidance on a range of welfare and childcare issues. The centre has a large volume of information that is displayed for parents, which many find very useful, although a few parents find it difficult to locate the most relevant information.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents</b>	<b>2</b>
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<b>and other users</b>	
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</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?**

**3**

The centre coordinator makes good use of available data to develop a clear and comprehensive service plan. She has carried out a thorough self-evaluation of the centre that incorporates the views of partners and staff. This has provided a well-researched basis for the centre action plan. However, some of the planned targets in the service and action plans are insufficiently measurable.

The centre is satisfactorily managed. Staff are supported well through the monthly supervision meetings which assist them in their work. They are given suitable training to aid their development, including into new roles. However, the centre's ability to develop more sessions, activities and venues is affected by the number of staff who are experienced in working with families. 4Children's management recognise this and are training one of the staff to facilitate some of the sessions.

The centre has suitable representatives, including parents, on its well-established advisory board. Members know the provision and centre well but do not sufficiently challenge its work or strategic direction. Attendance at the advisory board is sporadic and the group are trialling different meeting times to attempt to increase this. Parents have a mixed awareness of who is representing them on the advisory board and the centre does not sufficiently publicise their names, contact details or roles.

The centre has sound partnerships with health professionals that are being used productively to offer a seamless service and increase the range of provision. Partners and centre staff share their expertise and contacts well. The childminding network that runs at the centre is particularly strong and is enabling more childminders to gain accreditation to offer funded early years education. One of the schools that the centre works with is benefiting from the wider range of services now available to parents, particularly those that are harder to engage with. However, the partnerships to help parents access further training, education or work are less well developed.

Centre staff promote equality, diversity and community cohesion well. As a result of this, participation by some typically under-represented groups, like those of Black and minority ethnic heritage, is increasing. Staff have a good awareness of the specific tensions that exist within the groups they work with and take great effort to break down barriers. Parents welcome this approach and perceive they can access all activities. One parent said, 'Staff ensure there are no cliques and bring people

together.’ Although most activities are held during the day, additional sessions are programmed during the summer to enable those that work to participate.

Safeguarding is satisfactorily managed and appropriate records are maintained of staff and volunteer Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. 4Children’s safeguarding policies and training are thorough and staff are clear about the procedures they should follow if an issue arises. They have developed effective links with other agencies for referring safeguarding cases. The centre has visually stimulating safeguarding-awareness-raising posters displayed in the entrance area.

Parents have suitable formal and informal opportunities to give their views to the centre. They find the staff approachable and welcoming of new ideas. Staff evaluate their sessions but do not analyse the results or track trends. A recent Say and Play initiative is giving the centre coordinator very useful feedback from its users to shape the services and activities. Parents are not told about what happens as a result of them giving their views. The centre has not run its annual parental consultation survey this year so cannot track recent trends in satisfaction or provide all its users with the opportunity to contribute to developments and the self-evaluation. The centre offers satisfactory value for money.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</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>3</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

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 Windmill Hill centre on 14 and 15 July 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

During our visit, we talked with a number of you, visited some of the sessions and met the professionals who work with the centre. We would like to thank all of you who contributed to the inspection.

The centre coordinator and staff make good use of their local knowledge to identify the activities they offer and make sure these meet your needs. It was good to see that they have developed the community room in Ludgershall and that a wider range of sessions are taking place. Some of you told us that you would also like to see the centre offering sessions in Perham Down and that you were uncertain about some of the recent changes to the programme, including the age ranges. We agree with you that there are areas that the centre could further develop and have asked the centre coordinator to look at this on your behalf. We also would like the centre to offer more sporting activities for families on a regular basis.

It was good to see how much you and your children enjoy visiting the centre. The staff give you good support and advice, especially about healthy eating, childcare provision and welfare. This advice is helping to reduce obesity in children in the area. The outreach worker, who helps parents in their own home, is increasing the number of families she works with and helping improve their well-being and safety. Although staff are focused on ensuring the safety of your children, we did have concerns that children playing in the outside area were not always supervised enough.

Staff plan their sessions well and adapt topics to meet your stated needs. Sessions like Baby Babble are being designed to help children communicate better and we were pleased to hear that some of you use the songs, rhymes and tips at home. The staff understand what it is like to be in a military family and they use this well to try and reduce cliques and make everyone feel welcome. They give you good quality support and help.

It was good to hear how volunteering and training courses had been a positive experience for some of you. However, very few of you take up volunteering or opportunities to gain more qualifications. The centre needs to develop stronger links

with training providers and partners who provide employment advice to assist those of you that need this advice and guidance.

The centre is satisfactorily managed. The centre coordinator and staff have identified what they need to improve and have developed a clear action plan. The advisory board is enthusiastic about supporting the centre management, but we would like them to play a stronger role in questioning some of the centre's actions and strategic direction. Some of you did not know which parents represent you on the advisory board, or what they did, so we have asked the centre coordinator to give you this information.

Those of you who have taken part in the Say and Play sessions have given the centre coordinator some useful feedback about how the centre could improve what it is offering. We have asked the centre coordinator to make better use of your views in the future and also to find out more about what families not using the centre would like. We also thought it would be helpful if the centre made you aware of how your views had been used or the reasons why it could not follow up any of your suggestions.

Thank you again for helping us with our inspection. We wish all the very best to you and your family.

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