

# Inspection report for Paulsgrove Area Children's Centre

---

|                            |                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Local authority</b>     | Portsmouth City Council |
| <b>Inspection number</b>   | 384046                  |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>    | 21–22 September 2011    |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b> | Joanne Caswell HMI      |

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Centre leader</b>               | Gill Noble  |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | Not previously inspected  |
| <b>Centre address</b>              | Paulsgrove Area Children's Centre<br>Cheltenham Road<br>Paulsgrove<br>Portsmouth<br>PO6 3PL |
| <b>Telephone number</b>            | 02392 6385995   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                  | n/a   |
| <b>Email address</b>               | paulsgrovechildrenscentre@portsmouthcc.gov.uk   |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Linked school if applicable</b>                     | n/a |
| <b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b> | n/a |

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.

---

**Report published:** October 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'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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 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 management team, two headteachers, representatives of the local authority, health professionals, members of the Partnership Board, front-line staff, parents and partner agencies.

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

## Information about the centre

Paulsgrove Area Children's Centre originated from a local neighbourhood nursery and was commissioned out to a local school in 2005. In the latter part of 2009, following an annual conversation, governance of the centre was returned to the local authority. A new centre leader, who also holds senior responsibility for the operational management of a number of centres in the locality, has recently taken over the strategic management of the centre. At the time of inspection, she had only been in post for two weeks. The centre is a phase one centre which was designated in 2005. It is located in the Paulsgrove area of Portsmouth and serves one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. The centre links closely with two sites in the local community which host outreach services. There is a high level of need in the area, with 80% of families served by the centre in receipt of state benefits. Unemployment levels are high within the local community. Paulsgrove is less ethnically diverse than other parts of the city, with the majority of families being of White British heritage. Children's levels of skills and understanding on entry to school are often lower than those expected for their age.

Paulsgrove Area Children's Centre provides the full core offer services and has health professionals, such as health visitors, operating from the centre. A Partnership Board is in place and includes membership of partner agencies and a range of stakeholders.

## 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 families**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Paulsgrove Area Children's Centre is becoming a well-established part of the local community. Parents already accessing the centre's services receive a good range of support and information and this is having a positive impact on children's development and family well-being. The local authority has an exceptionally clear vision for the centre and knows the needs of the community very well. In 2009, it recognised the centre was not sufficiently meeting these needs and resumed governance arrangements. Since then, the centre has doubled the number of families accessing services, and attendance levels are continuing to rise each month. Recent data show the centre is reaching the majority of families within the area and concerted action is being taken to improve this further.

The local authority and senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the centre. As a result, they clearly recognise what is needed to drive the centre forward to increase the numbers of families using its services. Challenging targets are set, which are closely monitored. The centre confidently recognises the importance of meeting these targets to improve provision overall. The Partnership Board is focused on improving the centre's effectiveness and is fully involved in the self-evaluation process. Parents' views feed into the Steering Group and Family Forum and help to shape some future services. However, there are limited further opportunities for parents to be more closely involved in the governance arrangements.

The local authority is working hard at strategic level to improve the range of agencies actively involved in the centre. This is leading to an increased range of services being delivered. The new leader demonstrates an exceptionally clear vision and focus for the centre's future development. She is supported by a highly experienced centre coordinator. These professionals work together very well and share the same commitment towards improving services for a greater number of local families. Professionals who deliver services from the centre told inspectors the improvements they had already noted as a result of the new management structure. For example, a full review of the centre's services is leading to an increased range of services which is significantly improving outcomes for families. As a result, the centre

demonstrates good capacity to improve.

Outreach services are effective and improving, as they continue to reach more families. Centre staff focus on engaging with the most vulnerable groups with persistence and increasing success. Partner agencies join together to deliver services within the local community to actively target areas where families are not yet using the centre. Staff are fully committed to breaking down barriers that may prevent families from accessing the support they may need. All staff form strong and trusting relationships with centre users, which underpin its good care, guidance and support.

Safeguarding arrangements are good throughout the centre. All staff are highly trained and are fully committed towards early identification and prevention strategies to support children's welfare. Families facing crises or difficulties in their lives are given strong support. Long-term evaluations are starting to be completed to demonstrate the impact of the centre's services on individuals, but these are not yet fully consolidated across all services.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Develop the centre's governance arrangements to increase parental involvement in decision-making processes.
- Strengthen outcomes for a greater number of families by meeting, or exceeding, the local authority's agreed targets.
- Consolidate the current procedures for monitoring and measuring the longer-term impact of the centre's services.

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

|          |
|----------|
| <b>3</b> |
|----------|

The outcomes for families using the centre are satisfactory and improving. Parents recognise the importance of accessing the services to improve their own well-being and prevent isolation. One parent told inspectors, 'You can get isolated at home, we love it here.' Parents develop a clearer understanding of the importance of health and nutrition and benefit from practical activities, such as cookery courses. One parent told inspectors the 'Cook, Eat, Freeze' group had enabled her to 'cook decent food for not much money'. Imaginative activities, such as 'Wii Fit' sessions, encourage parents to get active and benefit from physical exercise. Groups such as 'Toddlers Movers and Shakers' encourage children to benefit from physical play. This is leading to reduced obesity levels in the majority of children.

Mothers confirm how much they are supported with breastfeeding and benefit from the 'Baby Feeding Group' for specialist advice. Targeted support enables parents to clearly understand effective weaning programmes which encourage children's healthy development. Parents easily access health visiting services at the centre through the Child Health Clinic. However, at present, midwifery services are not freely available. Across the city, designated specialist support is available for teenage mothers and young parents. Recent data show these services are supporting over half the teenage parents within the city.

Centre users confirm how safe they feel at the centre and good attention is given towards keeping families safe. The centre is very secure and staff are vigilant in safeguarding arrangements. Parents have an improved understanding of keeping children safe by recognising how to identify dangers and risks. This has included specialist support from the emergency services that visit regularly. For example, they use practical activities to help children understand issues such as road safety and the dangers of fire. Home safety checks help parents understand potential hazards and take precautions to reduce the numbers of accidents within the home. This is having a positive impact in reducing the numbers of children requiring hospital treatment.

The Police Community Support Officer and Community Wardens are regular visitors to the centre and form positive relationships with the local residents. Centre users confirm this makes them feel safer within the local area. Parents have an improved understanding of fitting children’s car seats safely, as a result of specialist advice. The centre is fully involved in the Common Assessment Framework and has played a significant part in reducing the numbers of children on the child protection register and those requiring a child protection plan. Effective links with external agencies, such as foster carers and children’s services, ensure safe arrangements are in place for any looked after children.

Children are better prepared for school as their needs are recognised early. For example, targeted support is in place to promote improved language development through the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme. Parents develop a better understanding of how to support their children’s learning by attending groups such as ‘Messy Wednesday’ and ‘Little Explorers’. These help them begin to understand the value and purpose of play and exploration. As a result, children’s progress within the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving. Some parents using the centre are beginning to improve their own aspirations. For example, one parent told inspectors, ‘I’m more confident after doing an English course.’ A small number of parents have developed their skills and improved their knowledge by gaining formal qualifications, such as GCSEs in mathematics and English and National Vocational Qualifications in childcare.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>3</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>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, 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</b>  | <b>3</b> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b> |  |
|--|--|

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

|          |
|----------|
| <b>3</b> |
|----------|

The centre currently provides a wide range of services and these are satisfactorily matched to local need. Participation rates are increasing and attendance levels are improving. Services are being accessed by the majority of families within the area, including those from known vulnerable groups. However, the centre is aware that some hard to reach families within the community do not use the centre's facilities as frequently as others.

The quality of care provided by the centre is good. Centre users praise the dedication shown to them by centre staff. One parent summarised the feelings of many parents spoken to by inspectors, by describing staff as 'open and friendly'. There is a very homely and relaxed atmosphere within the centre and staff are keen to establish very positive, trusting relationships with all families. Well-targeted support and appropriate guidance from relevant professionals leads to improved outcomes for parents and children. Parents confirmed that they received the amount of information they needed in order to support their families' needs, particularly at times of crisis.

Effective links are established with agencies such as training providers and Jobcentre Plus. This helps increase parents' employability and improve their confidence to return to work. A few parents are currently on the volunteer programme and are developing additional skills and responsibility. Crèche facilities and childcare arrangements are provided to enable parents to access training and develop their own confidence and self-esteem.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>      | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>   | <b>2</b> |

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

|          |
|----------|
| <b>3</b> |
|----------|

The centre leadership team is fully committed to improving outcomes for families. It recognises the importance of the centre's services within the local area. Parents already using the centre are receiving very positive experiences. One parent summarised this view by stating to inspectors, 'The centre gave my child a future.' Governance arrangements are secure and there are clear lines of accountability and challenge. However, parents' role within the governance of the centre is limited.

The local authority monitors the centre closely and is aware of the importance of increasing the reach data. Methods for self-evaluation are robust at management level and clearly identify areas for development. All centre activities are routinely evaluated and parents' views feed into this. Centre users complete 'In my Own Words' feedback forms which track their progress from when they first start at the centre. However, the procedures for evaluating the long-term impact of centre services are not yet fully embedded and consolidated across all agencies working with individual families. As a result, at times, the centre has found it difficult to evidence longer-term impact for some vulnerable families.

Safeguarding arrangements are a key strength of the centre, with robust procedures in place. Rigorous recruitment checks are completed and all staff and volunteers regularly undertake child protection training. Effective integrated working between all agencies ensures the families at most risk, and those known to be vulnerable, are closely monitored by the centre. As a result, families experiencing issues such as domestic violence and abuse are supported very well and signposted to relevant services.

Equality and diversity is promoted satisfactorily throughout the centre. Community cohesion within the area is improving. The centre is continuing to address removing the barriers that are preventing a greater number of families from accessing the centre. All family groups within the local community are represented. However, it is recognised that the centre is currently reaching only a satisfactory number of families within the area. Specialist services are provided, where necessary. For example, the Portage service works closely with the centre to offer support to families with children who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Fathers and male carers are included in all activities and there are specific groups for grandparents and foster parents. All children achieve in their learning and the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest is continuing to close. The most recent Early Years Foundation Stage data show a strong improvement in children's learning. This represents the positive impact of the ECAT programme and specialist support from the Early Years Advisory Teacher. Targeted support is given to enhance boys' language development through the 'Loud and Proud' programme.

User engagement is developing. Parents complete evaluations after each activity and there are satisfactory systems to gather the views of children. Centre staff value parents' feedback. The Family Forum and the completion of surveys and consultations enable most parents to share their views. The centre is proactive in attempting to access the views of families not yet using the centre and is persistent in its outreach work to improve this.

The centre currently provides satisfactory value for money. It recognises the importance of increasing the numbers of families using the centre and is working hard to address this. The centre's timetable is generally effective and satisfactorily meets the needs of the local families. However, some parents expressed a wish for more drop-in activities to be available, particularly when the Child Health Clinic is running. The centre is currently considering this. Staff are highly trained



professionals and have access to regular training and development opportunities. Outreach services are continually targeting the most vulnerable and are reaching a satisfactory proportion of families.

*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>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</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>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>     | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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 Paulsgrove Area Children's Centre on 21–22 September 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk to us about your involvement and experiences at the centre. It was very enjoyable to meet with you and your families. You made it very clear to us how much you appreciate the children's centre and the support you receive from staff. Many of you told us about the positive impact the centre has had on your lives,

particularly when you may be experiencing difficulties. We found the staff are very caring towards you and provide you with the relevant guidance you need.

We thought the centre's safeguarding arrangements were good. Staff make sure the centre is always a safe and secure place for you and your families and they take the relevant action when they know extra help and support is needed. For example, the staff work very closely with other agencies when you and your families may be experiencing a crisis, or feeling vulnerable, and they know what to do to keep you safe.

We recognise the families already accessing the centre are receiving a very positive experience. However, the centre is currently meeting only a satisfactory number of families. The centre knows it needs to increase this number so that more parents and children can benefit from its services. The local authority has set the centre a target to improve this. We have also asked the centre to focus on this target and increase the numbers of families using the centre's services.

We thought the range of services provided by the centre is satisfactory and improving. The current range of services is having a positive impact on improving outcomes for you and your families. For example, you see the health visitor regularly at the centre at the Child Health Clinic. Some parents told us how important this has been to get specialist advice about children's healthy development. Some of you told us how much you had learnt about healthy eating and had received support to continue with breastfeeding when you were finding it difficult.

We noted that some parents had completed professional qualifications and this has given them more confidence. As a result, some parents are better qualified to apply for jobs and training opportunities. A small number of parents are developing their skills by becoming volunteers and helping within the centre. We noticed the centre helps parents to understand more clearly how children learn and develop through high quality play experiences. Some of the centre's activities, such as Little Explorers and Messy Wednesday, give you ideas of what activities you can provide for your children at home.

We noted how well the centre welcomes all children and families. Groups are organised to ensure that no family is disadvantaged. All children are making a positive start in their learning when they start school. Targeted activities help children's language development and show that children's communication skills are better when they start school. We met with school staff and found that all children are settling into school quickly and making a positive start in their learning.

We noticed that the centre has lots of information about how it is helping you now. However, it does not have strong systems in place to securely measure the longer-term impact of the centre's services. We have asked the centre to address this.

The management arrangements for the centre are strong and these have been improved recently by the appointment of the new centre leader. The centre leader and centre coordinator work together very well and they clearly know what they

need to do to make the centre even better. We met with some of the members of the Partnership Board who monitor the centre and ensure it meets local families' needs. We recognised that parents were not fully represented on the Partnership Board and had limited opportunities to be more closely involved in the decision-making processes. We have asked the centre to address this.

Thank you again for your participation in the inspection. We would like to wish you and your families the very best for the future.

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