

# Inspection report for Wootton Bassett Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383859
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 May 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joyce Cox

<b>Centre leader</b>	Rachel Stewart
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Centre address</b>	Longleaze Primary School, Byron Avenue, Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire SN4 8BA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01793 851224
<b>Fax number</b>	None
<b>Email address</b>	rstewart@spurgeons.org

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Longleaze Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Longleaze Pre-School & 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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## 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 an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the head of centres and other staff, the early years advisory teacher, parents, representatives of the advisory board, a variety of the centre's partners, a representative from the local authority and the Area Director for Spurgeons. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Wootton Bassett Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in December 2007. It is located in small purpose-built accommodation in the grounds of Longleaze Primary School and has established satellite services at Lyneham and Broad Town. The centre does not provide childcare and is managed by Spurgeons through a service level agreement with Wiltshire County Council. It is run alongside Malmesbury and Cricklade Children's Centres which are managed by the head of centres with the centre coordinator managing the day-to-day organisation. Although the centre is on the same site as the primary school and the pre-school and works in partnership with them, the centre has no direct organisational links with them. The head of centre joined the Wootton Bassett staff team in 2010 and the centre coordinator started in July 2011. Spurgeons took over the management of the centre from Barnado's in 2011. During the reorganisations, there was a reduction in staff and changes in the staff contractual duties and hours. Jobcentre Plus has a service agreement with Next Steps to provide support on employment issues. Currently 50% of families in the reach area participate in the centre's activities and engage with its services.

The reach area is within the 65% deprivation ranking nationally but there are three Super Output Areas where the levels of deprivation are higher. One of these areas ranks within the 30% most deprived nationally. The centre serves 1,040 children aged under five years. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on benefits is below average at 11%. There are approximately 390 lone parents within the reach area. The children's centre serves a community of which most

(94%) are White British, with the remaining population being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The centre provides a range of services, including health and family support services, play and learning experiences for children and adults. The centre offers advice and guidance to parents on day-care and childminding facilities available within the local community. Children start Early Years Foundation Stage provision with a range of skills and knowledge which are often below expected levels for their age, particularly in their language.

There is an advisory board in place which is made up of a cross-section of professionals and parents. The centre's main room is used to run a variety of early years and family-focused sessions and staff work in partnership with other professional agencies to deliver a programme of universal and targeted services to meet the local community's needs.

## 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**

<b>3</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>3</b>
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## Main findings

Wootton Bassett is a satisfactory children's centre. For those who engage with the centre, it provides an inclusive and welcoming environment. The dedication and commitment of the staff ensure families feel supported and very safe. Comments from users such as, 'I feel very happy here' and 'Staff work so hard', are typical. However, not enough families, particularly lone parents and fathers, engage with the centre's services. The quality of care, support and guidance is good as is the quality of support provided for those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Effective multi-agency working is improving the life chances and personal development of some of the targeted groups.

Outreach work with vulnerable families is effective and there are rigorous assessments of their needs. In February 2012 a 'have your say' event consulted parents about their training and learning needs. However, the centre does not routinely identify learning and development needs of other users. Consequently, opportunities are not provided for all families and adults to gain skills to improve their economic stability and academic abilities.

Staff place a high priority on safeguarding. Families and children are kept very safe because of staff's diligent attention to safety measures. 'Stay and Play' sessions are well attended and appreciated by parents. However, while children clearly enjoy the activities very much, there is insufficient focus given to developing early language. There are missed opportunities to show parents how to interact with their children to extend their language.

Senior leaders have a good awareness of the centre's strengths and areas for development. Staff evaluate how effectively they are engaging with target groups and have successfully identified their own target group of forces families. Consequently, they established a satellite service for families who may be anxious about their future with the re-designation of the Lyneham RAF base. The centre is moving forward despite recent significant staff reductions and changes. Staff have successfully enabled more families to benefit from the nursery funding for two-year-olds and in raising the number of mothers who attend the breastfeeding group. Closer working partnerships with the adjacent primary school are providing much needed additional accommodation for the centre. The future looks bright but because the number of families engaging with the centre remains lower than expected, the capacity for the centre to improve further, at present, is satisfactory.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Increase the number of families engaging with the centre's services, particularly the lone parents and fathers living in the community.
- Enhance the learning and development of babies and children who attend the Stay and Play sessions by:
  - ensuring play practitioners take every opportunity to interact with the children to promote their language development
  - providing parents with good examples of how to promote their children's communication skills.
- Increase the number of parents who access training and employment by:
  - undertaking routine assessments of adults' needs
  - providing training and development opportunities that are matched accurately to need.

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

<b>3</b>
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Outcomes for families and their children are satisfactory because too few families attend the centre's activities. One aspect which is good is the high quality advice and support provided to vulnerable families in their homes. Staff engage with 70 out of the 71 families identified whose current circumstances make them more vulnerable. Case studies show that these families have benefited considerably from advice on debt management and acquired essential furniture. 'Cook Together' sessions are

improving families' knowledge of the importance of a healthy diet. Consequently, a below average percentage of children are deemed to be obese in the Reception Year. There is a satisfactory focus on keeping healthy through activities, for example 'Rock, Rhythm and Rhyme', but data show that too few families take regular exercise. The outdoor area enables outdoor play but there are few activities to encourage families to be active. Visits from dental care practitioners encourage regular tooth brushing but data do not show that these sessions are improving oral hygiene. Staff and parents have been successful in improving the number of babies who are being breastfed. Figures have risen from 37% in 2010 to almost 50% in 2012. This is due to the setting up of a 'Breast Friends' group where parent peer supporters encourage new mothers in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. The weekly health visitors' baby weighing clinic is well attended and parents benefit considerably from good advice about healthy weight gain and minor ailments.

Good multi-agency working ensures the arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are effective. Parents and children feel very safe in the centre and say that they are encouraged to think about safety in their own homes. The majority of the families receiving support in their homes have taken advantage of a free fire-safety check. Staff are highly effective in supporting children as part of the Common Assessment Framework. There is good evidence of improved outcomes for the majority of children on child protection plans.

Children make satisfactory progress in their learning and development. They are satisfactorily developing their social skills and independence in the 'Stay and Play' sessions. The gap between the outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is narrowing slowly. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores in 2011 show that 60% of the children achieved 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children's attainment is lower in their communication, language and literacy skills. The centre does not provide childcare and does not have data to demonstrate how effective the 'Stay and Play' sessions are in contributing to children's learning and development. It was evident during the inspection that staff are not interacting sufficiently to extend children's language development, nor are parents given enough guidance on the most effective ways to interact with their children at home. Parents who attend the centre are encouraged to have their say and discuss their needs and five parents have signed up to be volunteers at the centre. Families who require help with living within a budget and access to benefits are well supported. A Next Steps adviser liaises with parents when needed and helps them in developing return to work plans but the numbers of parents involved is relatively small.

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>2</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 parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>3</b>

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

<b>3</b>
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The quality and range of services offered are adequate and the centre meets the needs of some of the target groups. This is particularly evident in the case of those identified as in most need of intervention and support. Parents expressed appreciation for the support they receive and the positive changes that have resulted for their children and themselves. Case studies show how staff support them through difficult times and how their lives would be very different without the centre's help. They describe how courses, for example, 'Toddler Taming', have improved home life as they are more confident in dealing with tantrums. Lone parents are not targeted for support and there are very few events specifically for fathers. Signposting for support in stopping smoking are displayed but no actual programmes are running.

The centre satisfactorily supports children's learning. The early years advisory teacher supports staff in improving their knowledge and understanding of how to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. New activities, for example 'Book Share', are planned to enhance children's early reading skills. Staff are starting to chart children's progress in learning journals. Over the last year the centre has adult literacy courses such as 'Crafty Tots' and 'Learning about Literacy.' However, there are currently no specific activities to support parents' own academic development in literacy, numeracy and computer skills. Several parents expressed a desire for further adult-training courses. In the 'have your say' discussions, parents also requested more information on child development. The overall assessment of users' needs and the tracking of progress are of variable quality. Analysis of data and information is improving and the centre has increased the range of services provided. For example, 'Stay and Play' sessions successfully support vulnerable families identified as needing to improve their confidence and parenting skills while developing children's independence and readiness for learning.

The quality of care, support and guidance given to families who access the centre's services is good. Health visitors work very closely with centre staff to pinpoint vulnerable families and the family support worker provides good outreach activities to successfully improve outcomes for parents, families and their children. Many new parents attend the weekly baby clinics run by health visitors and community nursery nurses. They say they feel very supported and reassured by these sessions and many choose to register with the centre. Families using the centre receive tailored support to develop their well-being. For example, centre staff always provide transport for

those parents who want to attend a course but have no transport. Any children with additional needs receive good support and good opportunities to enjoy the centre's superbly equipped sensory room.

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?**

**3**

The head of centres leads the three centres well and has succeeded in uniting staff after an unsettling period due to changes in management and staffing arrangements. Senior leaders are supportive and have a strong commitment to the centre and to the ongoing development of its role in the community. Carefully considered management systems support the day-to-day running of the centre. Governance is satisfactory. Most advisory board members have received training and are actively involved in promoting the provision. They are starting to evaluate the centre's work and to ask challenging questions. The service plan is satisfactory and senior leaders have identified improvement areas. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and supervision arrangements are well developed and regularly held.

Effective use of data on families' participation in activities indicates the need to expand engagement with lone parents and fathers. There are clear links between the centre's evaluations of its services and priorities set out in the development plan. Key partners are involved in planning and many services are integrated. Senior leaders have a clear picture of what needs to be improved. For example, plans to deliver more adult-training courses are looking more possible with closer liaison with the primary school which could provide larger accommodation for courses and crèches.

The centre provides satisfactory value for money. Staff are committed to sustainability and this is achieved through effective sharing of staff expertise and resources across the three centres. The inclusion of all children and families is central to the centre's vision; equality is promoted, diversity celebrated and discrimination tackled. Staff support vulnerable families effectively and good support is given to families who have someone with a disability or special educational needs.

Partnerships with other agencies are good and ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services to help the centre meet its core purpose. Effective communication and successful integrated approaches provide good quality support and guidance. For instance, the centre has established good relationships with the Psychology Service and offered low mood and stress management courses to families at



Lyneham as this is an area where families are currently facing huge uncertainties about their future, not only because they may have relatives in Afghanistan, but also because of the restructuring of the base. Staff routinely evaluate the impact on parents and children based on parents' feedback at the end-of-group sessions. Parents' views are used to improve services further where the budget permits.

Safeguarding is given high priority and all the arrangements are good and there are systems and regular training in place to maintain and update them. Recruitment practices are effective and ensure all adults working with children are suitable. Effective multi-agency working ensures that vulnerable families are well supported and, therefore, children are kept safe. Centre staff carry out careful risk assessments to ensure the centre is a safe place. For example, parents and staff are vigilant in ensuring that no hot drinks are brought anywhere near the children. Through intervention and support programmes, staff help families to recognise their responsibility to keep their children safe. As a result, there are improved outcomes for children on child protection plans.

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>2</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

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Wootton Bassett Children's Centre on 1–2 May 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to come in and meet with us and tell us about your centre. We can see that you appreciate the support and advice the staff give you and that you love meeting other parents and making new friends. Many of you said how safe and happy you and your children felt at the centre and that staff are always friendly and helpful. Centre staff are very good at helping parents to keep their homes as safe as possible and we know several of you have had a fire-safety check. It is brilliant that some of you are volunteering at the centre as you say this really helps you and the staff.

You told us that your babies and children enjoy coming to 'Bumps and Babes' and 'Stay and Play' sessions and that they are learning to share nicely and play well with other children. You said you would like more courses to learn new skills and more information about how your children are learning and developing and how you can help them. We agree that more adult courses to help parents who want to improve their English, mathematical or computer skills that could help you into employment would be good. We have asked the staff if they can talk more with the children in the 'Stay and Play' sessions to help them to develop their language and learning and to give you ideas of how you can play and talk with your children at home so they get the best possible start.

We enjoyed reading your comments about the activities that you have enjoyed and how courses, such as 'Taming Toddlers', have helped you to understand your child's needs and emotions. Some of you say this has helped you to cope better and feel less stressed and anxious during tantrums. Those of you who visit the weekly health visitors' baby clinic clearly feel well supported and it is great that you can be quickly reassured about any aspect of your baby's weight or general health. It is brilliant that many of the more experienced mothers are really kind and supportive towards new or anxious parents. Many of you and your children have obviously enjoyed attending the 'Cook Together' courses and some of you found the first-aid course very useful.

We have seen that the care, support and guidance the centre provides are good. Several parents told us how staff never judge anyone but are always welcoming and supportive. Several of you have regular home visits from the Family Support Worker which you say have been much appreciated in times of crisis. We saw how well the centre staff work with other partners, for example the health visitors and the midwives to support your children's health and development. Many positive services are provided by the centre but not all families with young children in the area come

to the centre. We have asked the centre staff to reach out to more fathers and those who may feel isolated as they are lone parents so that they too can enjoy coming to the centre.

Thank you again for helping us with the inspection. It was good to meet you all and we wish you all the very best for the future.

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