

Inspection report for Fratton Children's Centre

Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	404508
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Centre leader	Kathy Wallis
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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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 parents, partners and managers. They also met with representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Fratton Children's Centre was designated in 2009 to offer the full core of services. Childcare is offered by a number of early years settings located close to the centre. The centre is located within Penhale Infant School. Some services operate from Manor Infant School and from Landport Sure Start Centre which are both near the centre. Some health services are delivered from centre premises by health professionals, including some ante-natal care and healthy child clinics. The local authority oversees the management of the centre, and is responsible for its operation.

There are 1,027 children aged under five years living in the centre's reach area. The area is one of the most 30% deprived in the country, and it has the third highest level of deprivation in the city. The level of deprivation has increased in recent years. The proportion of children living in households dependent on workless benefits (32.6%) is above local and national averages. About one fifth (21.5%) of children living within the centre's catchment area are from ethnic minority heritages. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entering statutory education at the age of five years are generally at below the levels expected for their age.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Fratton Children's Centre provides good quality services that make a positive difference to families. Outcomes and provision are good; some aspects are outstanding. The centre offers a welcoming and nurturing environment that is well used by the large majority of local families. Staff are compassionate and skilled, and all share a common purpose to improve outcomes for families, especially those most in need. Families value the services offered, and comments such as, 'The centre has been a lifesaver for me' are typical of most. Exemplary safeguarding procedures ensure children and vulnerable adults are kept extremely safe. Families and their children develop a superb understanding of how to keep themselves safe through parenting support, practical home advice and courses such as paediatric first aid. As a consequence, outcomes for them staying safe are outstanding.

Effective leadership focuses on the correct priorities for improvement. Health and social care partners have high levels of involvement at strategic and front line levels to provide coordinated services to address identified priorities. All partners value their engagement with the centre and positive and communicative relationships are focused on improving outcomes. However, not all partners are fully involved in evaluating and planning centre services. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

In the past year, there has been concerted establishment of systems to collect and analyse data about the reach area and the particular needs of each group to increase their engagement with services. This has resulted in exceptional levels of registrations and attendance for all families, especially those from groups of the community considered 'hard-to-reach'. The overwhelming majority of almost all of these, such as teenage parents and those with ethnic minority heritage, have regular contact with the centre and the large majority enjoy sustained engagement to enjoy an extremely broad range of services. As a consequence, the range of services,

activities and opportunities is outstanding.

Health outcomes are good and improving as a result of strong partnership working between health and centre staff. Families develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles well, and the centre can demonstrate some particular successes, such as in the reduction of levels of childhood obesity from 18.4% in 2010 to 8.4% in 2011, which is below national and local averages. However, the centre does not yet consistently demonstrate improved outcomes for the broad range of health issues faced by families.

The inclusion of every family is at the heart of centre planning. The extent to which the centre promotes equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff endeavour to address the needs of all target groups and individuals, and routinely accommodate individual needs of those with disability or additional needs to facilitate their full participation. For example, audio information is provided for those adults less confident with reading. Families are fully involved at all levels of the centre's governance. Parent volunteers help deliver services, running groups such as 'Stay and Play' sessions. Parents are routinely involved in board meetings. They contribute to strategic decisions by involvement with tendering interviews and contribute via focus groups to partner service reviews. The superb engagement of parents in decision making at all levels, combined with exceptional levels of engagement in services, lead to outstanding user engagement. Outcomes for making a positive contribution are also outstanding.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes for all families, especially those most in need, and establish systems to demonstrate the impact of services clearly.
- Enhance the involvement of partners in the centre's development so that all are fully engaged in evaluating services and improving them further.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families gain a good understanding of being healthy. Attendance at healthy child and ante-natal clinics is good, and parents appreciate the child-friendly environment for their appointments. Rates of sustained breastfeeding are slightly lower than the national average: data show that 44% of mothers breastfed at six and eight weeks. There is evidence of improvement as a result of breastfeeding support groups and peer-supporters helping mothers. The centre has influenced breastfeeding practice as a result of a parent's experience, by disseminating expert advice via a poster used across the city. Case study evidence shows the impact of some groups such as 'Cooking on a Budget', and baby groups improve the overall health of families. The centre is embedding evaluation to evidence these outcomes, but the full extent of the impact of these services on families' health is not yet routinely measured.

Children in the reach area are making good progress in developing their skills. Leaders track those children from the Fratton area, and recent data show many do better than their peers elsewhere citywide. In 2011, the majority of children achieved better levels of skills, knowledge and abilities than was the case both nationally and locally. Effective transition processes into and out of early years provision means children are well prepared for their next stage. The centre has been proactive in working with settings to identify and address common issues with families, such as head lice and toileting issues through its 'Getting ready for nursery' information. Adults enjoy their engagement with the centre, and learn a great deal about parenting and child development through individual work and groups such as 'Stay and Play'. Families with English as an additional language develop understanding and confidence in their use of English through their engagement with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, such as the Group for Chinese Speaking Women. Adults most in need of support achieve well against realistic targets in developing parenting skills, for example, as a result of well-planned outreach work.

The involvement of Jobcentre Plus has a good impact on improving families' economic well-being, especially for lone parents attending weekly sessions at the centre. A few adults have moved into employment or further training. Eligible parents are well prepared for future changes to their benefits, and are planning ahead to deal with any reduction as a result of targeted advice. The successful volunteer programme equips parents well for employment, and two have recently found work.

The centre makes exemplary use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to implement early intervention for vulnerable children and their families. Rigorous monitoring of 'Family Files' ensures rapid and sustained involvement and outstanding outcomes for staying safe. In addition, staff engage extremely well with families in crisis to gain their trust, which allows for a collaborative and highly effective process. One parent commented, 'At the centre, staff offer advice without being judgemental.' Children on child protection plans make extremely good progress as a result of very good partnership working with health and social care.

Parents are involved in every aspect of centre life and their positive contribution is outstanding. Some influence governance directly through attending meetings, while others give their feedback on services more informally through the 'wishing line' or other evaluative tools. Staff are excellent role models and build extremely strong relationships with families, and as a result everyone is very respectful of one another. The centre's excellent community links are well established through its proactive involvement with the Fratton Federation and the many community organisations that attend these meetings. The centre works sensitively and collaboratively with local agencies to access required services for its families, and is held in very high regard by other community organisations.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
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	1
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Provision is good overall. Groups such as 'Messy Play' and 'Stay and Play' deliver activities planned to promote good learning and development for children and their parents. Good steps are taken to improve children's speech and language development. Activity boxes are loaned to families to support children's learning at home; books are given to those who access relevant health checks, together with information on how the child will benefit from story and rhyme. The use of additional premises and other children's centres to deliver some groups meets users' needs well, and they say they appreciate having the service available locally. Sessions for specific groups, such as that for disabled children and those with special educational needs complement universal services to meet needs well.

Families access good quality services. Informative displays around the centre educate adults on a wide range of issues, including the dangers of smoking and contraception. When families face challenging circumstances, they feel comfortable to seek help from the centre. Staff are reactive to their needs and give emotional support and practical help that enable parents and their children to improve their outcomes.

The centre is exceptionally successful at reaching almost all families in target groups and the range of services is outstanding. These levels have increased rapidly over the past year as a result of concerted action to the quarterly 'peer review' process to assess the needs of the community and match services to these needs accurately. Families with ethnic minority heritage access a wide range of specific and general services. The centre coordinates its services with those already available in the community very well to avoid unnecessary duplication. For example, it supports a local parent and toddler group for Chinese families that runs nearby. Almost all families of ethnic minority heritage (100%) are registered with the centre and a very

large majority (68%) have sustained engagement with its services. There has been a 67% increase in engagement of male carers as a result of seeking their views to match provision to need, and the majority of male carers (64%) are registered with the centre, and 34% enjoy sustained engagement.

High-quality outreach work provided by centre staff and partners, including Homestart and the Pre-school Learning Alliance, is tailor-made to meet individual needs very well so that it is extremely effective in supporting and enabling vulnerable families. Consultation with parents is very well established, so programmes of support and courses are discussed in full to ensure they are worthwhile and collaborative. The centre has developed an exceptional range of available services through extensive networking with partner organisations and a determination to source services needed by its families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Effective governance underpins the centre's work. The local authority provides strong systems at a strategic level. Senior leaders and the centre coordinator provide well-constructed leadership focused on early intervention and improving outcomes for those most in need. Leaders are proactive in improving services. For example, when the needs of the area changed, an additional child and family support practitioner was funded. The Partner and Practitioner Boards are effective, and are complemented well by the work of the Fratton Federation. Partner involvement on these boards is generally good, although not all partners are fully involved in working to develop centre services further. The centre coordinator is highly influential in her role, and delivers enabling leadership to her skilful team. Performance management arrangements are well established and self-evaluation is accurate to inform future planning. Systems used to evaluate all services and their impact are developing well. Good use is made of the centre's limited space and additional premises. Therefore, the centre provides good value for money.

Safeguarding procedures are outstanding. Rigorous checks are made to ensure all staff and volunteers are suitable to be working with children. All staff and volunteers are trained and demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to keep children and vulnerable adults safe. Those who experience domestic abuse are protected very well with excellent emotional and practical support. Rapid sensitive action is taken to

keep families safe when unexpected issues arise. Excellent strategic management of child protection processes ensures the correct action is quickly applied to gain the best possible outcomes. Early intervention strategies are very successful to prevent the unnecessary escalation of situations.

The centre is highly effective at ensuring every family has the best chance of improving their overall outcomes. Outstanding user engagement leads to services that are very well matched to families' needs. Families influence the timing and content of groups. The successful engagement of target groups means all have opportunity to benefit from the centre, and case studies and files indicate their outcomes are improving rapidly. Supported childcare provision provides essential respite for families facing challenge, including those with disabled children and those with learning difficulties. Those children at risk of falling behind their peers in their learning and development are doing well in the reach area: the gap between the lowest 20% and the rest has improved significantly in the last year to 19.9%, which is much better than the city average of 30.3%.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	2
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	1

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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Fratton Children's Centre on 4–5 December 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for welcoming us to your children's centre when we visited recently. We enjoyed speaking with many of you. We found Fratton to be a welcoming centre that meets the needs of families well.

There are several aspects of the centre's work that we graded as outstanding. The high priority centre staff give to keeping you and your families safe is excellent. They are highly knowledgeable and have very good systems in place to seek extra help. Many of you are developing your understanding of how to keep yourselves and your children safe very well, through having home safety equipment provided, or attending first-aid courses, for example. As a result, this aspect of staying safe is also outstanding.

Everyone at Fratton treats one another with a very high level of respect, so it is a very harmonious centre. Staff go to great lengths to make sure services suit your needs very well, and their promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding.

Managers are very good at identifying who lives in the centre's reach area and who might benefit from the services on offer. They use a number of partners, such as Homestart and Jobcentre Plus, to help improve families' circumstances, and the range of these services on offer is very good. This leads to most families knowing about the centre, and a large majority of you attending regularly.

Those in charge have a good understanding of how the centre needs to develop further, and we have asked them to consider two areas of development. The first is about how you are helped to be healthy. Many of you told us you appreciate attending healthy child clinic or midwife appointments at the centre. These help you and your children become healthier. We have asked the centre managers to continue developing more opportunities to improve the health of local families. For the second area, we have asked staff to enhance their work with some partner agencies so that all are fully involved in helping the centre to improve.

We appreciated hearing how much you value the staff of Fratton Children's Centre, and hope you continue to enjoy its services in the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk