

# Inspection report for Bincombe Children's Centre

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| <b>Local authority</b>     | Dorset             |
| <b>Inspection number</b>   | 404444             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>    | 17–18 January 2013 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b> | Penny Mathers      |

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Centre leader</b>               | Liz Rowe  |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | Not previously inspected  |
| <b>Centre address</b>              | Bincombe Valley Primary School, Culliford Way, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 6AF |
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|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>Linked school if applicable</b>                     | Bincombe Valley Primary School |
| <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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, senior leaders of the school, representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies, such as the health services, parents and carers and other users of the centre.

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

## Information about the centre

Bincombe Children's Centre was established as a Sure Start centre in 2007 and has been offering the full core purpose since 2009. It is one of a cluster of four centres serving the borough of Weymouth and Portland, which are currently subject to separate inspections. The centre is now managed by Action for Children but is held accountable for the provision of services through a quarterly local authority contract meeting. Governance arrangements include a Cluster Advisory Board and a Parents' Forum. The Children's Centre Cluster Manager is currently managing the day-to-day activities while the centre lead is on maternity leave. The centre is located on the same site as Bincombe Valley Primary School and serves the immediate areas of Preston, Littlemoor, Upwey, Broadwey and part of Radipole.

The centre is located in the community of the reach area that has the highest levels of deprivation and is amongst the most deprived 20% across the country. Overall, approximately 18% of the children under five are members of families who depend on workless benefits. A high proportion of the children served by the centre are identified as experiencing difficulties in their lives and there is a high proportion of children identified as having special educational needs. Children's levels of attainment on entry to early years provision are below those expected for their age. Forty per cent of children registered at the centre live in the lowest-achieving postcode areas.

The ethnic makeup of the area is mainly White British families living in a wide range of social, estate-based housing. The number of children under the age of five in the reach area is 981 and increasing.

The centre is open every weekday and services offered include baby and toddler support groups, play and learn sessions, outreach family support and health services. Outreach services are also provided at several community venues within the reach area. Given the close proximity of, and close links with, other children's centres in the cluster, it is common for families to access services from more than one centre.

## 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

Overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory and improving. Action over the last year has resulted in a steady increase in the numbers of families using the centre and outcomes are generally improving. The centre is well placed in the community it serves and closer links are developing well with the link school and its nursery. Although the centre is well known by those living in the vicinity, road signage to the centre is presently unclear.

The centre is relaxed and welcoming. Further plans are in place to improve the layout of the building. Systems for safeguarding are strong and staff work well to ensure children and families are kept safe. The care, guidance and support the centre offers, particularly to those most in need, are good. As a result, parents trust the staff, feel well supported and are growing in self-esteem.

High-quality activities are provided in the centre, such as parent and toddler groups and short courses on child development. Although enjoyed by parents and children, some health-based activities are not always targeted sufficiently at those most in need of improved health and do not fully meet the objectives of promoting physical activity. Families are well signposted to other centres in the cluster and further activities are available in other venues, including the local church hall. Parents who

have taken part in learning sessions report how these have enhanced their understanding and relationship with their children.

Leadership and management are good and have improved over the past year, enabling staff to work well together. The advisory board provides clear strategic direction and has recently increased its ability to challenge practice through setting and monitoring clear targets. An independent chair is being recruited and this is planned to further increase the level of challenge to improve services.

The local authority regularly provides a set of reach data, but further collection of outcome data is needed to allow the centre to fully evaluate the impact of its services and inform future planning. Relationships and partnerships in the reach area and cluster are generally good and improving. However, not all partnerships are developed fully to enable services to be delivered in a completely integrated manner.

Evaluation is comprehensive and used well to inform the service plan that is producing improved provision and outcomes for families. The strong commitment and ability of its leaders, managers and staff, combined with steady improvements in partnership working and good quality care and support, means the centre has a good capacity to improve.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve promotion of the centre to include better road signs to the building so that it is more easily accessible.
- Ensure health sessions are targeted at those identified as in need of improved health outcomes and ensure the session's objectives are fully met.
- Work with the local authority and partners to improve the collection and use of local data to evaluate the outcomes and impact of services to enable resources to be targeted even more effectively.
- Strengthen relationships and develop partnership working to deliver fully integrated services focused on the needs of the most vulnerable families in its community.

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

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Child health outcomes are gradually improving through a satisfactory range of activities aimed at reducing obesity rates and increasing breastfeeding. These include a friendly breastfeeding support group as well as one-to-one support and weaning sessions. Breastfeeding initiation rates have increased from 78% to 81.7% but sustained breastfeeding is not yet demonstrating a significant improvement. Families' understanding of a healthy lifestyle has increased through participation in sessions such as 'Fun with Food' and 'Incredible Edibles' where parents learn about healthy food on a budget and portion control. An 'Active Tots' session is provided where

parents are encouraged to get active with their children, but it is not always those most in need that attend and the session is not as active as it could be. Links with health professionals are good and early referrals are often made for speech and hearing difficulties.

Children and their families feel safe and protected within the centre through good security measures. Children gain a good understanding of dangers and behave safely. Parents learn well how to keep their children safe through attending sessions such as 'Save a Baby's Life' and activity workers encourage parents to be aware of safeguarding policies and procedures. Parents appreciated the strong focus on safeguarding and learn how to keep their children safe in the home through sound advice and use of home-safety equipment. Parents, including those with learning difficulties and lone parents, improve their parenting skills well and grow in confidence. The centre is engaged well with locality working and the early prevention strategy and their focused work reduces the amount of time children are subject to a child protection plan.

Children and parents enjoy playing in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. High levels of enjoyment from adults and children were seen in 'Active Tots' and 'Messy Monkeys'. Parents transfer the skills they learn at the centre to improve play at home. One mum typically commented, 'We learn something new every week.' Children who transfer to the nursery are now better prepared for school. The results for children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation stage have increased significantly since 2010. Children attending the 'Making Sense' programme and 'I can problem solve', both set up in response to language deprivation, improve their use of language and settle more quickly in school.

Parents using services manage children's behaviour more positively and their attitude to their children improves. Parents are respectful and children learn to treat one another with consideration. Families who attend 'Making Sense' benefit from improved relationships and have less risk of family breakdown. Parents are actively encouraged to volunteer; two parents currently work as volunteers to support other families and another helps with running an activity session. Opportunities to get involved with the centre's governance are not yet fully used by those in the more vulnerable groups.

Families appreciate the support from Job Centre Plus and worklessness in the area has reduced slightly. Courses are available for numeracy and information and communication technology and parents value the 'Cooking on a Budget' course that enhances their cooking skills. The Citizens Advice Bureau session and benefits advice from outreach workers have had a positive impact on the finances of families from vulnerable groups, with those with special educational needs being particularly well supported. A small but increasing number of parents have been well supported to move into employment and access further education.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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| <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>2</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?

**3**

The centre is increasingly matching the services and activities to the needs of the community it services. Registration and attendance have steadily increased over the past year, with 51% of families registered, but there is a considerable distance to go to reach the targets set. However, the centre is increasingly identifying the families in most need of intervention and provides good-quality sensitive assessments leading to bespoke programmes. For example, a 'Young Parents Group', 'Dads Group', a 'Raising Aspirations' project for 16 to 19-year-olds planned to reduce teen pregnancies, and a group for those with English as a second language.

The well-structured sessions enable parents to gain new skills that result in improvements for children. For example, one mum commented, 'We set a new bedtime routine and stuck to it. Now bedtime is calm and not something I dread.' At 'Bookstart', parents improve their parenting skills and learn ideas for encouraging a love of books. Parents of children with special educational skills are becoming more skilled in advocacy on behalf of their children. Some parents train and attain a qualification in volunteering. Achievement is celebrated through awarding certificates and parents appreciate the help to complete detailed learning journals that record and celebrate their children's progress and are used to plan for their development. Purposeful learning is promoted and learning goals are recorded well, but there is not always sufficient focus on those most in need of support. However, increasing numbers from the target groups are beginning to be engaged, particularly through the work with the nursery.

Families who attend the centre value the good-quality care, guidance and support they can trust. Support is flexible and tailored to individual need and includes leaflets, contact numbers and one-to-one support. A review of case studies, together with interviews with parents, demonstrated clear examples of how families have

been sensitively helped with a wide range of complex issues to ensure positive outcomes. Staff are knowledgeable about agencies and services in the area and well able to signpost families appropriately and help well during a crisis. Staff provide support confidently in cases of child protection and domestic violence. They are skilled at reaching out to new families and are now increasing their involvement with those most in need.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| <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?**

**2**

Governance is clear and the local authority sets targets and holds Action for Children accountable for the provision of service through a quarterly contract meeting. Leadership and management are good, with clear roles and responsibilities but this has only developed during the last year and it is too soon for this to be fully reflected in outcomes. The staff are well trained and motivated and work well as a team. All staff have annual performance reviews linked to good personal development plans and access good professional supervision that improves practice. A Cluster Advisory Board meets every two months offering challenge and good networking. Evaluation is rigorous, accurate and regularly carried out. Individual sessions are evaluated and used to improve practice. Data is reviewed regularly and programmes amended as a result of evaluation. Value for money is satisfactory. Accommodation is suitable and resources are well managed, with creative use of outreach services. While the proportion of families attending the centre is increasing, there are still areas where the numbers attending and benefitting are too small.

The centre is narrowing the achievement gap well in the Early Years Foundation Stage between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest through the close working with the link school's nursery. Equality and diversity are promoted well and all are welcome at the centre, including those with disabilities. Groups are available at weekends for those who work during the week and there are good regular sessions provided for dads, for example, 'Dads' Baby Massage' and activity weekends. Bullying and unacceptable behaviour are promptly challenged.

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place and staff have a clear awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities gained through regular training and meetings. Recruitment procedures and Criminal Records checks comply with government requirements. All attending activities are made aware of safeguarding issues and feel



safe. Families troubled by domestic violence are supported well and signposted to appropriate services. Outreach workers pick up safeguarding issues quickly, work well with other agencies to promote the safety of children and are very clear about their involvement in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). They ensure a smooth transition when families move on to other services. A good early intervention service is provided that demonstrates improved outcomes, especially for those with special educational needs.

Relationships and partnerships, although less effective in the past, are developing well now and services are becoming more integrated. Midwives and health visitors now share data and are increasingly involved with the centre, promoting involvement and registration through their family contact. Regular meetings and joint planning with health visitors have increased confidence, trust and cooperation. Productive relationships are developing with the local Methodist Church where some activities are delivered. Over the past year, parents and children, staff and agencies have been listened to more. Opportunities for involvement have increased and they are encouraged to get involved and shape services. Parents are increasingly voicing their views, feeling their ideas are valued, and influencing the programmes. The large majority are satisfied with the services and the parents' forum is used well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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|---|----------|
| <b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>                         | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>  | <b>2</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>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>                | <b>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>2</b> |

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

Not applicable

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Bincombe Centre on 17th and 18th of January 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

It is an improving centre because staff are steadily improving relationships and partnerships in the area to bring about improvements as well as listening to your views. There is a strong commitment to improve the centre and the support that is available and especially to meet the needs of families who need most support.

During our visit, we inspected your centre's plans for the future and numerous documents, including your evaluations of activities that you have attended. We spoke to a wide range of agencies that work with the centre, as well as staff, members of the advisory board, school and nursery staff and representatives from Action for Children, the local authority and the health service. We visited activities including 'Messy Monkeys', 'Active Tots' and 'Bookstart'.

Action over the last year has resulted in a steady increase in the numbers of families using the centre. The centre is well placed in the community it serves and closer links are developing with the nursery and school. However, not all groups of parents, including some of those who would most benefit from the support available, are registering or attending the centre. This may be because they do not know about the services on offer or because they lack confidence. We have asked the centre to improve the promotion of the activities and road signs to the centre, as although the centre is next to the school and the nursery is well known by those living in the vicinity, it is difficult to find from the main road. We have also asked for the staff to measure the impact of the services they provide more carefully so that they know what makes a positive difference to you and can identify those families needing support better.

You have told us the centre is relaxed and welcoming and we understand plans are in place to improve the building. Systems for safeguarding are strong and staff work well to ensure you and your children are kept safe. You have told us the care, guidance and support the centre offers you is good and that you trust the staff and know who to go to for help when needed. A number of you have benefitted from help with training, employment and support with claiming benefits.

High-quality activities are provided in the centre, such as parent and toddler groups and short courses on child development. Families are well signposted to other centres in the cluster and further activities are available in other venues, including the local church hall. You report that the courses you have attended have enhanced your understanding and relationship with your children. Some active sessions have not always been targeted sufficiently at those in need of improved health and are not that physically active. We have asked the staff to improve this.

The significant improvement in leadership and management over the past year has led to it being good. Better team working, a steady increase in the number of registrations together with a much higher proportion of families involved with the centre are bringing improvements. Action taken recently has sharpened the focus on priorities; evaluation is good and work on measuring outcomes is improving well. As a result the capacity for sustained improvement is good.

We are grateful to those of you who willingly gave up your time to speak with us and share your views. You spoke very positively about the support and guidance and about how important the centre has been to you. We hope that in the future even more parents and children will attend and benefit from the services.

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