

Baffins Children's Centre

St Cuthbert's Community Centre, Hayling Avenue, Copnor, Portsmouth, PO3 6EA

Inspection date 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Good	2
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families	Good		2
The quality of practice and services	Good		2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management	Good		2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre

- The centre is reaching a large majority of families with children under five years old who are registered with the centre and benefit from its services and advice, especially those in most need.
- Effective joint working with health colleagues aids the centre's very good early actions to secure improvements for individuals. The centre successfully engages with the majority of its key target groups.
- This vibrant and welcoming centre uses its location well to place itself at the heart of the community. The centre is very well led and managed. Centre staff are passionate about improving the life chances of the local community. The children's centre manager has a clear vision for the centre based on an accurate and honest view of the centre's strengths and areas for future priority.
- Families hold the centre in high regard and greatly appreciate the guidance and support on offer. As one parent commented, 'If it wasn't for the staff at Baffins, I would not have survived going through a very rocky patch. I was made to feel very welcome and they gave me the confidence to get my life back on track.'
- The work of the governing body is effective and both challenges staff and drives improvement. The local authority provides excellent support. It sets challenging but realistic targets to make further improvements to the already good impact the centre is making to the lives of the families it serves.

It is not outstanding because:

- Levels of childhood obesity and rates of breastfeeding are too variable; despite the otherwise good work of staff to improve the health outcomes for children and their parents, impact in these two areas is limited.
- Relatively few fathers take part in the regular activities of the centre, and the centre leaders recognise that this is an area for improvement.



Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children’s centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leadership team, family support workers, officers from the local authority and partners from health, education, community development, and the early years advisory teachers. Visits to activities such as 'Stay and Play', 'Singing Ducklings' and midwife and child health clinics were undertaken. They also met parents, volunteers, and representatives from the practitioner and partnership boards, and the parent forum. They looked at the centre’s self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and a range of other relevant documentation. The centre manager, together with representatives from the local authority, attended all meetings of the inspection team.

Inspection team

David Scott, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Lesley Talbot-Stettle	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre was designated in March 2009 as a phase three stand-alone centre and delivers a range of services, including health, parent and toddler groups, family support, ante-natal and adult learning. It operates throughout the year, and is open Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday 8.30am to 4.00pm. Once a month, the centre is open on Saturday for a session for male carers and their children. Baffins is located within St Cuthbert's Community Centre, and shares the accommodation with the Corner Pre-School, Baffins Surgery and Portsmouth College. The centre is managed by the senior child and family coordinator, and is monitored by the area lead, and the head of early support service on behalf of the local authority. The partnership board, comprising key partners and parent forum representatives, provides governance. The practitioner board, consisting of all the children's centre co-ordinators in the City and partner-agencies, provides a forum for sharing information.

The centre's reach area includes 927 children under five years of age, some of whom are from minority ethnic families, predominantly Asian. The area is very mixed socially and economically, with pockets of deprivation. For example, almost a fifth of children in Baffins ward are in the top 30% most deprived areas in the country. Information shows that 9% of children live in workless households and 18% of families are eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The centre has identified children who are in most need, families living in the most disadvantaged areas, teenage and young parents, fathers, lone parents and families from minority ethnic backgrounds as its key target groups.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work closely with health professionals to reduce the levels of childhood obesity and increase the rates of breastfeeding.
- Increase the number of fathers who attend the centre by:
 - finding out why this group does not attend as regularly as others
 - publicising more widely the range and benefit of services on offer.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre is located in a highly accessible position within the community. Through its effective work with health partners and housing groups, the centre staff have gained a very good knowledge of their community. This has enabled them to ensure services are effectively tailored to meet their needs.
- There is particularly good engagement, at over 83%. Children in most need, teenage and young parents, families living in the most disadvantaged areas and minority ethnic families, all of whom are high priority groups for the centre.
- The centre is sensitive to the needs of families in their own homes and does all it can to help them stay safe. Parents' awareness about health and safety in their homes is raised through the centre's useful practical help, home visits, safety kits and advice. As a result, they have become more self-assured and confident in managing risks.
- Parents benefit from attending activities such as 'Bumps' and 'Baby Time Drop-in' that help them give their children the best start and programmes that are specifically designed to improve their parenting skills. Information shows that 99% of eligible two-year-old children take up their free entitlement to early years education and are successfully helped to get ready for school.
- There are many opportunities for grandparents, parents and children to play and learn together through different innovative projects which support children's well-being and increase their self-confidence. The centre's activities make an excellent contribution to helping children build skills for the future.

- 'Men Behaving Dadly' runs monthly and is much enjoyed by those who attend and get involved in a range of popular activities, such as making cakes and muffins with their children. Although steadily rising, at 41%, the proportion of fathers regularly attending services is in the minority.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- At 74%, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is better than that seen locally or nationally. This is one indicator, among many, of the high impact that services have on reducing inequalities and making sure that children are ready for school.
- Various initiatives, such as 'Preparing that healthy lunchbox' and 'Cooking on a budget', together with fitness activities such as 'Buggy Blast' and 'Fun & Fit', have been designed to give families practical tips and advice on how to lead a more healthy lifestyle. However, centre leaders rightly recognise that these activities have only had a limited impact in reducing levels of childhood obesity. Over time, results have fluctuated and, at 9.4% in 2012, are just below the national average.
- Adult education activities at the centre equip those who attend with the basic skills, experiences and aptitudes needed for essential employment-readiness. A fifth of all children under five years of age live in homes dependent on workless benefits. Jobcentre Plus provides valuable advice to parents looking for employment. For example, in the last six months, 65% of those who have been referred have either gained employment or have undertaken training in readiness for work.
- As part of the local authority's early language initiative, the centre has focused on improving children's early language, communication and social skills through well-planned activities and the good role modelling by staff. 'Babbling Babies', 'Boogie Mites Mini' and 'Singing Duckling' sessions are very popular with parents, who are encouraged to understand how their child learns through play and exploring, and this extends their skills as co-educators as a result. The work of the early years advisory team has been invaluable in improving children's reading, writing and speaking skills.
- Excellent partnerships with a wide range of agencies and organisations enable the speedy identification of needs and fully integrated packages of support for target groups. Joint working with health colleagues aids the centre's good early intervention to prevent some difficult situations from escalating.
- The centre successfully engages with the majority of its key target groups to help them overcome personal challenges in their lives. Domestic violence is a particular issue in the area and, as a result of staff expertise, women experiencing domestic violence can safely access the activities and receive timely and effective support.
- The centre works very closely with health partners to address health issues at an early stage. Attendance at antenatal and baby clinics is high and has a positive effect in promoting parents' good understanding of child health and development. The centre actively promotes the benefits of new mothers initiating breastfeeding through specific workshops. However, the impact of these measures has resulted in a fluctuating trend over time. The centre manager and staff have already highlighted this as an area for improvement.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre is well led and managed by skilled staff who are passionate about their work; morale is high. The centre runs smoothly and day-to-day management is effective. Staff work very well together as a team and feel supported and valued by leaders and managers. Good professional supervision and management arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of staff and ensure their safety and well-being and that they are suitably trained.
- Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. The practitioner and partnership advisory boards are made up of a range of community members, centre users and partners who appropriately support and challenge the centre.
- Parents make a very positive contribution to the development of the centre through the 'Parent Forum' and their representation on the advisory board. Staff frequently seek their views informally

and through post-activity evaluations and use them to help shape services.

- The local authority provides excellent analysis of information, which the centre uses well to ensure resources are targeted to deliver good value for money and help those most in need. The senior child and family area coordinator is held to account for the centre's performance and is supported well by the local authority.
- The centre's priorities for improvement are suitably challenging and realistic and there is a track record of improving outcomes for families. A wide range of resources and services enable staff to provide high quality activities that meet the needs of young children and their families effectively.
- Parents make a positive contribution to the development of the centre through the 'Parent Forum' and their representation on the advisory board. Staff frequently seek their views informally and through post-activity evaluations and use them to help shape services. Volunteers working at the centre gain key skills that enable them to support the life and development of the centre before moving on in life.
- The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process works effectively to ensure that children, including those subject to a child protection plan, are well protected. Referrals are assessed swiftly so that children in need and those in the care of the local authority receive the help they need. The safeguarding of children and their families is of the highest priority for all staff and permeates the work of the centre.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's centre details

Unique reference number	22845
Local authority	Portsmouth City Council
Inspection number	423228
Managed by	Head of early support service on behalf of the local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	927
Centre leader	Heather Hostler
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	02392 861206
Email address	heather.hostler@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

(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.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

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 St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

