

# Burhill Sure Start Children's Centre

Burhill Community Infant School, Pleasant Place, Walton on Thames, Surrey, KT12 4HR

**Inspection date** 11–12 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:		
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- An increasing number of families are participating in centre services but the number of lone parents, those from workless households and the most disadvantaged communities are relatively low.
- Not enough parents, especially from the most disadvantaged families, enhance their education or work-place skills or engage in training. Where they are supported to do so, there are no consistent systems in place to follow up how well they do. This is also the case for children who attend the centre; parents say they develop their skills well through coming to sessions such as Play and Learn, but how well they do at the centre or when they move on to school is not tracked.
- Staff are not always provided with as much up-to-date information about the different groups in their area and where families need more targeted support. Where this information is available, it has not been used effectively enough to get a good balance of services between those that everyone can attend and those aimed at families who need more specific support.
- Parents are not formally involved in decision-making or keeping a close watch on the centre's performance as there is no parents' forum and no parents sit on the advisory board. The advisory board as well as the governing body, whilst supportive, have yet to develop their roles in effectively challenging the centre, particularly in relation to its impact on groups who need most support.

### This children's centre has the following strengths:

- The centre is very welcoming and friendly and parents are 100% satisfied with the support they receive. Families who receive one-to-one support, often when there is a crisis in their lives, benefit greatly from this, as can be seen from the thorough records that are kept and from their own testimonials. Families appreciate the high quality and availability of the resources as well as the excellent hygiene standards throughout the centre.
- Strong partnerships with the infant school and with health services ensure that there is a good focus on ensuring children, including the most vulnerable, are ready for school and in ensuring babies have a healthy start to life.
- Day-to-day management of the centre and the very small staff team is good. There is a strong commitment to improving services at all levels, including the advisory board.

### **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.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and other staff, the infant school's leadership team, officers from the local authority, health, employment adviser and early years partners. They also met parents and representatives of the governing body and advisory board. The inspectors visited several activities, including one jointly with the centre manager, who also attended all team meetings. They looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case studies, safeguarding policies and procedures and a range of other relevant documentation.

### **Inspection team**

Joan Lindsay, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Dickson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

The centre opened in 2008 as a phase three stand alone centre and it delivers or supports access to a range of services to meet the core purpose. Well Baby clinics and midwifery services are provided weekly from the centre. The building is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. for 48 weeks of the year. Services are also delivered from two community venues. The centre is adjacent to Burhill Infant School, whose governing body manages it on behalf of the local authority. The school was subject to a separate inspection. The centre manager, who has been in post for 18 months, is the only full-time member of staff. There were several staff changes during 2012. The part-time outreach worker took up her role in January 2013 and the information officer (also part time) returned after extended leave of absence in November 2012.

There are 1289 children under five years of age living in the centre's reach area. Children enter early years provision slightly below the levels expected for their age, especially in their communication and language skills. The area is relatively affluent; of 13 super output areas in the reach area, six are considered the least deprived in the country. However, two are very close to being within the 30% most deprived. In those areas, 20% of children are in workless households but the figure for the reach area overall is 8%. The large majority of families are of White British heritage. The centre has identified its main target groups as those from workless households, lone parents, disabled children and isolated families.

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

- Increase the engagement of lone parents and those from workless households by finding out why more do not use the centre. Use this information to refine services so that there is a more fitting balance of those open to all and those that meet more specific needs.
- Extend the opportunities for more adults, especially lone parents and those from workless homes, to enhance their basic skills and track the outcome of the centre's current work with adults and children by:
  - building stronger links with local adult education providers
  - carrying out regular checks on individual education and training needs
  - establishing a system to monitor how well adults and children progress as a result of accessing the centre services or those provided by other agencies.
- Improve information sharing between leaders and managers, the local authority and other partners to ensure that the most up-to-date data and information are available in relation to vulnerable families and target groups' access of services by:
  - improving lines of communication between various agencies, the local authority and the centre
  - ensuring staff are skilled and knowledgeable in relation to the information systems currently in use
  - using this information to improve the balance between universal and targeted services.
- Strengthen the level of challenge from the advisory board and ensure there is parental representation on this body to ensure parents' formal involvement in the development of the centre.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires Improvement

- Weekly baby and midwifery clinics have improved access to early childhood services for families and those expecting children. Large numbers of families from all target groups now attend, with many being introduced to the centre this way. Strong partnerships with health services ensure that families who need extra support are referred to the centre.
- The centre has been successful in supporting relevant families to take up free entitlement to early education, especially that available for two-year olds, and 20 such arrangements are in place. Almost all children from targeted groups are accessing early education locally.
- The centre has identified its target groups, namely those in the relatively more deprived areas, lone parents, those in workless households, disabled children and isolated families. It has been successful in increasing the number of disabled children coming to sessions open to all and through facilitating weekly meetings of Elmbridge Carers Support group. Isolated families have also increasingly benefited from the very popular groups such as Story and Rhyme and several weekly singing and movement sessions. Parents attending these groups say they and their children have been made very welcome and have established strong friendship groups.
- Outreach work has been less successful in encouraging some target groups to attend, partly due to the centre not always having accurate data and families not being entirely accurate about their status when they register. Nevertheless, there are currently no specialist groups available at the centre to enhance adult learning or increase basic skills, although the centre does signpost elsewhere. The centre is inconsistent in the way that it follows this up.
- Where individual families are identified as needing support, staff are very effective in supporting and in engaging them with centre services. However, occasionally they are not informed by other agencies when a vulnerable family is accessing their services.

### The quality of practice and services

### Requires Improvement

- The quality of the services is good but the range and relevance require improvement because all that is on offer is open to all. The popularity of the sessions mean that a large number of families come from outside of the centre's immediate area and do not necessarily fall into the centre's identified target groups.
- The impact of what is on offer is good in relation to preparing children, including the most vulnerable, for school. Parents say their children's confidence and social skills are much improved by coming along to the singing and story sessions and are enhanced by the staff who parents describe as 'amazing' and 'incredible and able to relate to all'. Parents' skills in helping their children learn and behave well are also enhanced at sessions because staff offer good advice and role model well.
- The centre's strong focus on encouraging breastfeeding, with trained staff and resources such as feeding chairs readily available, has had a positive impact on the numbers who are still breastfeeding at two months. Other health outcomes such as childhood obesity, which is below the national level, also show the centre as having a positive impact on children's health.
- The impact on families' economic well-being is not well established. There are examples of where individuals have volunteered in the centre or have been supported in other ways back to work but not enough families, especially from workless and lone parent households, have been helped.
- Families with specific and sometimes complex problems, including those who are in crisis, are supported well by caring, non-judgmental staff. Case files are maintained to a high standard and show that speedy and effective support from other agencies is galvanised where necessary. This has a deep-seated positive impact on those most vulnerable families. Appreciative parents typically comment on the 'caring staff's kindness, support and welcome advice' when their child has special needs. By establishing a well-used system on donating baby clothes and equipment for others to use as well as supporting the establishment of a food bank, families are showing that the centre is promoting community relations well. Open access to the outdoor play area for families ensures that

good resources can be used to benefit all and encourage a healthy lifestyle.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

### **Requires Improvement**

- The governing body and the advisory board, which includes a good range of enthusiastic partners, are fully committed to the children's centre. They are kept well informed about numbers accessing the services and other pertinent information, where data are available. However, they use this information to review rather than challenge the centre.
- The local authority undertakes regular visits but there has been little recently in the way of more robust specific target setting and challenge for the centre. Occasionally, the information the centre receives and the help in accessing and using the data systems has not been effective enough. Similarly, the centre's use and analysis of what data is available have not been used to good effect to provide a more appropriate balance between specific and universal services to meet the needs of some target groups.
- Strengthening relations with the senior leadership of the co-located school, clear lines of management responsibility, staff supervision and monitoring of staff and other providers are effective in ensuring the continuous professional development of all those involved in supporting families.
- Safeguarding policies, procedures and practices ensure children and families are protected effectively. This includes the most vulnerable children, such as those subject to child protection plans, children in need and those who receive multi-agency support via the Common Assessment Framework. The centre has responded well to the increasing numbers of families who are victims of domestic abuse by using thoughtful and imaginative ways to disseminate information and support.
- Resources are used efficiently. Only the centre manager has a full-time post and the centre's main family room is relatively small, but staff and other resources are well managed and supplemented well by using other providers and venues in the local area to meet the needs of larger groups.
- Families are unanimous in their support for the centre, and satisfaction levels could not be better. They feel their views are taken into account, especially in relation to the timing of sessions. There are numerous opportunities for families to evaluate the sessions and the centre as a whole. However, without a parents' forum and representation on the advisory board, there is no formal route for those views to be voiced and acted on or for families to participate in shaping the services.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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.

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20503
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	421443
<b>Managed by</b>	The governing body of Burhill Infants School on behalf of the local authority.

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1289
<b>Centre manager</b>	Sally Ruby
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01932 246918
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