

# North End and Willows Children's Centre

Meredith Lodge, Portchester Road, Portsmouth PO2 7JB

<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 April 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

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

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a good centre.

- The centre is at the heart of the community and is busy and popular. Parents speak very highly of the staff and value the support, advice and training they receive, particularly at times when they need most help.
- Strong partnerships with other professionals have a very positive impact on the number of families involved in the centre's services and the way that services are matched to families' needs.
- Children are very well prepared for school. The centre runs a range of good quality activities to promote young children's early learning and development and the skills and confidence of their parents. These, combined with the centre's excellent partnerships with pre-school providers, contribute to the excellent outcomes for children who have been engaged in centre's services.
- Children's safety and well-being are integral to the centre's work. This results in improving outcomes for families from different target groups.
- The centre leader provides strong leadership and staff are determined to do the best for families in the area. The local authority has robust systems for checking the centre's effectiveness and excellent systems for enabling centre staff to develop and share practice with neighbouring centres. As a result, the centre is improving.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The systems for monitoring and tracking adults accessing further education or employment are not sufficiently well developed.
- Breastfeeding rates are not improving quickly enough. Not enough support to promote breastfeeding is available at North End and Willows Children's Centre.

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

- Develop systems for measuring the long-term impact of the centre's work to demonstrate how well adults benefit from skills and training courses to enhance their economic well-being and employability.
- Work with parents to ensure that more sustain breastfeeding after six to eight weeks and provide more opportunities for support at the centre.

## 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, family support workers, local authority officers and representatives of key partners from health, education, and adult learning. They also talked to a number of parents attending activities in the centre, representatives from the governing body, advisory board and the parents' forum.

Inspectors visited several activities for children and their parents, for example, physical activities, Stay and Play and the crèche. They also visited an evening child health clinic for North End and Willows parents which was held at a nearby children's centre. They observed a course for new parents, Safety in the home, and a mathematics course for adult learners. Three activities were jointly observed with the centre manager or senior staff from the local authority. These leaders also attended inspection team meetings.

Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including analysis of information about the safeguarding of families, the centre's self-evaluation and plans for improvement, individual case files, comments and feedback from families and partners.

## Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Janet Dinsmore, Team inspector	Additional inspector
Rob Mottram, Team inspector	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

North End and Willows Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre. It underwent significant change in September 2013 when North End and Willows Children's Centres were merged. The Meredith Lodge in Portchester Road is the hub for most activities, although some are held very locally in adapted premises at the nearby Isambard Brunel Junior School or in the local Baptist Church hall. A few activities are held at Willows Centre for Children, such as the 'Men United' Saturday courses for male carers. Parents and carers are also able to attend provision at neighbouring children's centres as well as those held further afield in Portsmouth.

The centre is directly managed by the local authority. On a day-to-day basis it is managed by the child and family lead practitioner. She reports directly to the locality service manager who is responsible for two other centres in central Portsmouth. North End and Willows has its own newly-constituted advisory board and its own parent forum.

There are approximately 2,367 families with children under five in the area served by the centre. Most are White British, although there are some families of minority ethnic origin. These are mainly Bangladeshi, Eastern European or of African origin. The proportion of families living in households who are workless or reliant on benefits are above average. Most children in the area start their early years provision at levels below those expected for their age.

The centre has identified lone parents, teenage parents, parents from minority ethnic households, male carers and vulnerable families, and children living in workless households as those in need of particular support.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families Good

- Over recent years, the number of families benefiting from the centre's support, advice and activities has grown. Eight out of ten families in the area with children under five are registered and the very large majority, including those identified as priority groups, regularly join in with services.
- The centre works very closely with midwives and health visitors to ensure families are known. For example, health professionals refer new mothers to the very successful new parents' course and most new parents go on to benefit from other services offered by the centre.
- The centre is particularly successful in encouraging single parents and teen parents to join in activities at the centre, as well as others across the city. The centre engages teen parents to attend courses aimed specifically for them as well as others. For example, during the inspection, several teen parents were happily joining in a Stay and Play session which was aimed at a wider audience.
- Staff effectively identify the needs of families and their children. High levels of satisfaction and trusting relationships in the community, such as with the local Baptist Church, have led to a rise in numbers attending centre services, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Attendance at courses and activities is carefully monitored by staff and the centre has excellent, sensitive follow-up procedures to find out if attendance suddenly declines or if families are not registered.
- Excellent relationships with education professionals have ensured that the overwhelming majority of three- and four-year-old children access good quality early years provision in the area. The take up of early education for two-year-olds has risen and all families now take up this offer. The centre has worked successfully with local pre-school providers so that enough places are available to meet the demand.
- Outreach services and opportunities for staff with particular expertise to work across the area ensure a wide range of relevant services are available for families. Family support workers have a good knowledge of the varied and difficult issues facing many families, including isolation and financial crisis.

- Male carers' involvement in centre activities has recently increased by one third. Courses on Saturdays, such as Men United, Dad and Me, evening clinics and Dad's Bags for extending children's home learning, are all helping this group to become more involved with the centre and their children's well-being.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre is the heart of the community and parents' satisfaction rates are high. The centre's commitment to improving parenting skills is a prominent part of its work. Many parents report how well activities have helped them to develop their parenting skills and a support network. The centre works with some families in their own home to encourage those in most need to come to the centre when they might not otherwise do so.
- The centre's excellent work with local schools, early years settings and childminders prepares children for pre-school and school extremely well. During the inspection, the highly successful Stay and Play sessions attracted large numbers. Very well planned activities help parents and carers to develop their parenting skills as they socialise together.
- After observing a skilled child practitioner working and playing with their children, parents take away a bank of ideas for developing communication, language, personal and physical skills in their own home.
- The centre contributes extremely well to the slightly above average outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Assessment data show the attainment of those who have attended the centre is above national levels and better than their peers. The achievement gap between the the lowest achieving children and their peers is narrowing quickly and is now considerably lower than national levels.
- The centre has rightly identified that breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are too low, as demonstrated by the fall from the initial rate of 71% to only 36% by six weeks. The centre is targeting this for improvement, but there are not enough centre-based support and activities to promote breastfeeding.
- In response to the local need to increase the proportion of children who are of a healthy weight, the centre's effective partnership with health professionals is leading to improvement. The latest information shows a drop in local child obesity levels and is now lower than for Portsmouth. Case studies show striking improvement for some children. The centre provides many enjoyable activities to help families to provide a balanced diet, to provide sensible portion sizes and to encourage physical exercise.
- There are good links with partners, such as Jobcentre Plus, for parents trying to find employment or to improve their skills, including learning English as an additional language. Volunteering in the centre and community is also used effectively to develop parents' confidence and secure a potential pathway to work. However, the long term impact of these adult learning and employment opportunities are not being tracked. This prevents the centre systematically helping adults progress more quickly to develop more advanced skills or gain access to employment.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leadership and governance are strong. Leaders and managers are ambitious and dedicated to doing their best for families. They have an accurate view of how well the centre is performing and use all available information well to plan further improvements in outcomes for local families.
- The centre leader has the complete respect of staff and families in the community. Her excellent relationships with families and members of the local community have contributed to an increase in the numbers regularly joining in centre activities. Consequently, there are increasingly better outcomes for children and families, including those in most need of help.
- The local authority priorities are integral to the centre's targets. There are robust systems to check the performance of the locality service manager and the centre staff. Staff are very well trained and

arrangements for their supervision and appraisal are both supportive and challenging.

- The advisory board has recently reorganised and is widely represented by key partners and professionals, including health, education, social services and business. It has the capacity to challenge the centre and the local authority leaders. Recently improved arrangements for releasing information by health partners is enabling the board to provide better challenge about health matters.
- The centre consults widely with parents about its services and parental satisfaction is high. The parents' forum and parent partnership boards contribute more formally to the running of the centre and services are shaped through their contributions.
- The safeguarding of young children and vulnerable adults is a very high priority. All the required policies and procedures are secure for ensuring effective safeguarding practice across the centre's work. Staff are well trained and protocols are very clear and all records are kept very securely.
- Staff work very well with families experiencing difficulties to reduce the risk of harm to children. The arrangements for supporting the needs of vulnerable children, including those subject to child protection plans or Common Assessment Framework process, are extremely good. Records and case studies are kept meticulously and show outcomes for children and their families improve over time.
- The centre has established a wide range of partnerships and services within the locality and across Portsmouth. This ensures a wide range of expert help is available for families' benefit. The excellent sharing of good practice and resources between centres in the locality makes very good use of staff's expertise and ensures there is no duplication.

**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.

**Centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	22173
<b>Local authority</b>	Portsmouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	442874
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2367
<b>Centre leader</b>	Mia Jenkins
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	023 9265 0497
<b>Email address</b>	mia.jenkins@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

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