

Milton, Baffins and Cumberland Children's Centre

C/O Milton Park Primary School, Perth Road, Portsmouth PO4 8EU

Inspection date 12–13 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	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.

- Effective leadership, management and governance have ensured that outcomes for children and families have improved. Leaders' self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate and used to improve services.
- Most local families with children under five are registered with the centre and the large majority in most need of its services use them regularly.
- Staff are warm and welcoming and the centre is highly regarded by families and local communities.
- Strong partnerships with health, education, Jobcentre Plus and social care professionals have enabled the centre to provide effective support for families in most need.
- Effective safeguarding arrangements ensure that children are helped to keep safe. Swift, appropriate action is taken to ensure that children are protected from harm.
- Health outcomes for children are rapidly improving. Fewer children have obesity problems than in the past as a result of the healthy lifestyles encouraged by the centre. Breastfeeding rates are rising.
- Take-up of entitlement for two-year-olds to free education places is good and helps to prepare children for the next steps in education.
- Children who attend centre activities are well prepared for entering school and often do better than those who do not attend.

It is not outstanding because:

- Planning for learning activities does not show enough detail and parents are not always helped to see the progress in their children's learning.
- The advisory board does not challenge leaders enough. A few members do not attend meetings regularly.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure staff's planning shows clear learning purposes which are shared with families.
- Ensure that parents are fully informed of the progress their children are making.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the advisory board by:
 - increasing members' understanding of how to measure the impact of the centre's actions so that they can provide greater challenge to leaders
 - ensuring all members regularly attend meetings.

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 children's centre locality manager, centre leader and staff, representatives from the local authority, advisory board, parents' forum and parents. They also spoke to several partners, including those from health services, adult learning and employment and voluntary organisations.

The inspectors visited a range of services, including stay and play, child health clinic and baby massage.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including self-evaluation documentation. They also looked at the centre's action plans, safeguarding policies and a sample of case files. The centre manager and local authority representatives attended most of the inspection team's meetings.

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jameel Hassan	Additional inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Milton, Baffins and Cumberland Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre. It underwent significant change in September 2013 when Milton, Baffins and Cumberland Children's Centres were merged. The Milton Centre in Perth Road is the hub for most activities. However, some are held at Cockleshell Community Centre, St Cuthbert's Community Centre and Eastney Methodist Church. Most venues are within approximately one mile of the Milton centre and are easily accessed from all areas it serves. Parents and carers are also able to attend neighbouring children's centres as well as those held further afield in Portsmouth.

The centre is situated on the same site as Milton Park Primary School. It is directly managed by the local authority. The child and family lead practitioner is responsible for the day-to-day management of the centre. She reports directly to the locality service manager, who is responsible for two other centres in the southern area of Portsea Island, Portsmouth. Milton, Baffins and Cumberland Centre has its own advisory board and parent forum.

There are approximately 2,622 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 from White/Asian, White/Black African and Eastern European heritages. The area is very mixed socially and economically, with pockets of deprivation. Almost one in five children under the age of five are living in workless households, which is broadly average. Most children in the area start their early years provision at levels below those that are typical for their age.

The centre has identified children in greatest need, families living in the least advantaged areas, teenage and young parents, lone parents, minority ethnic families and male carers, as those requiring particular support. Services provided by the centre include family support, health, adult learning and education.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre provides a very warm, welcoming atmosphere which puts families at ease and encourages them to participate in activities. Effective partnerships with health professionals and Jobcentre Plus have resulted in a significant increase in the number of families accessing services, including those from target groups.
- Health visitors and midwives carry out baby clinics and checks of young children and mothers-to-be on the premises. The Jobcentre Plus representative is based at the centre for two days a week. Staff from these services help families to become aware of the range of services the centre provides. This has had a strong impact on increasing the proportion of lone parents and male carers registering and using a wider range of the centre's services. Almost all lone parents are now regularly taking advantage of a range of centre's services.
- The centre uses partnerships well to assess the needs of priority parents and provides them with suitable activities. The centre keeps a careful record of the parents who have English as an additional language. It successfully engages them in the centre's activities or at other centres, for example, for learning English as an additional language. Multicultural events attract families from a wide range of backgrounds, including those from minority ethnic communities.
- Most male carers are in full or part-time employment. Fortnightly Saturday events held at the centre or at a neighbouring centre enable male carers to participate. Most fathers and male carers have engaged in 'Dads to Nursery' events and dental hygiene activities.
- Staff working in the community identify those families that would otherwise be unlikely to attend the centre by using home visits and promoting services at various local places. The staff's very good knowledge of families living within their area helps to ensure both health clinics and family learning events are held in convenient places for families, including at Eastney Methodist Church and Cockleshell and St Cuthbert's Community Centres. Consequently, sessions such as stay and play are well attended.
- Staff have been particularly successful in encouraging families with two-year-old children in need of additional support to use the centre regularly. Very good links with local nurseries have enabled the large majority of the eligible children to take up free early education, and almost all those aged three and four take up their entitlement to free pre-school education.
- Excellent links with other agencies ensure that most mothers with mental health and well-being issues and teenage parents get the support they need. The local community holds the centre in high esteem and often recommends the centre to local families in need of help.
- There is a clear focus on supporting families living in low income households in order to break down barriers to accessing provision. Travel costs are covered so that families can reach other centres in the locality or wider afield in Portsmouth. This supports attendance at courses for families learning English as an additional language.
- Staff monitor and evaluate attendance at individual sessions and carefully follow up reasons if families do not turn up. Consequently, the centre is successful in increasing levels of engagement with families.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre's services, ranging from 'social baby workshop' sessions to adult and family learning, are varied and of good quality. They have a very positive impact on families' health and well-being.
- The centre's support for children and families in greatest need is timely and well integrated. Highly effective one-to-one work helps a number of families to get through times of crisis so they can make positive choices. Very good multi-agency work with health, education and social care professionals and one-to-one advice about benefits ensure those in most need receive the help they need.
- Parents greatly enhance their parenting skills and increase their understanding of how to keep their children safe by attending new parenting and paediatric first aid courses. Some have safety courses

in their own home, for example through Home Check. Consequently, hospital admissions for children living in the Milton, Baffins and Cumberland areas have decreased significantly in recent years.

- Health outcomes are also strongly improving. The centre's courses such as cooking low-cost nutritious meals and physical activities such as 'fun and fit' are having a good impact on reducing child obesity. Child obesity levels for the centre's reach area have fallen over the past two years and are now slightly below national averages.
- Close working with health professionals and the centre's regular support groups have strongly contributed to better sustained breastfeeding rates. The rate is now in line with national averages and better than that for Portsmouth.
- Helping prepare children for school is at the heart of the centre's work. Staff engage very productively with local early years settings to enhance children's development and to prepare them for school. Assessment information for children at the end of their Reception Year shows that the attainment of those who have attended the centre is rising. In 2014, it was slightly above national levels and children did better than their peers who did not attend. The achievement gap between disadvantaged children and non-disadvantaged children is closing and is lower than national figures.
- The introduction of on-site employment services has very successfully aided a number of parents to train as volunteers as a step to gaining employment. A number of parents have taken basic skills courses and returned to education or gained work experience or employment. The centre enables parents to find good-quality childminders and helps childminders to stay up to date and develop their skills further.
- The promotion of language is a key focus of all centre-led child development activities, including singing songs and creative stay and play activities. However, planning for some activities does not show enough detail and families are not always helped to understand the purpose behind children's learning activities. Additionally, children's progress is not recorded clearly enough on their learning records, which limits adults in knowing how much progress children are making.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leadership, governance and management are good. All staff and partners are driven by a commitment and passion to help even more families, especially the ones in most need. Their self-evaluation is accurate; they use data well to monitor performance and know where further improvement is needed.
- The centre manager is a very effective leader with a relaxed, calm and positive manner. There is a clear line management structure and the local authority has implemented rigorous systems to check the performance of the locality leader and centre staff. Clear and effective procedures are in place to supervise staff and check their performance and to provide well-considered training and development opportunities.
- The local authority sets a very clear strategic direction. Very regular support and challenge meetings ensure staff provide high-quality services that are matched to parents' and children's needs.
- The local authority has overall governance of the centre and successfully maintains oversight of the centre's performance. The advisory board is developing but has several new members, including a new chairperson. It is formed of key partners, which include health, employment and education professionals as well as parents. However, the board is not yet able to fully challenge or hold centre leaders to account. The parents' forum makes a good contribution to decision making.
- The local authority is providing training for new advisory board members in order to develop their skills and confidence. For example, they have attended training in how to understand performance data so that they can check what the centre does well and what needs to be improved. Some members do not attend advisory board meetings regularly, and this reduces the effectiveness of the governance of the centre.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Rigorous recruitment and selection procedures are in place. The centre provides good early intervention and prevention work to protect those in most need.

Case files are maintained to a high standard and a comprehensive range of policies and procedures underpin the centre's daily work. Children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans and those deemed to be children in need are very well supported.

- The centre promotes equality well to ensure that all children and parents within the area are able to access services. For example, resources are made available to pay fees that allow those on a low income to access activities, such as education or training courses.
- The centre works closely with other centres in the community and ensures families are able to visit activities wider afield in Portsmouth when needed. This ensures resources are used well to broaden the range of activities for families. This wider range of activities is popular with lone parents.

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	22024
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	454055
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,622
Centre leader	Kath Carter
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	02392 827392
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