

Southsea and Brambles Children's Centre

Havelock Community Centre, Fawcett Road, Portsmouth PO4 0LQ

Inspection dates	1–2 July 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

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

- The centre staff provide a very warm welcome to all families and demonstrate high levels of respect and sensitivity for their different circumstances and cultures.
- The centre's registration rates have risen in the past two years. As a result, most families, including those belonging to priority groups, are registered and the large majority engage regularly.
- The excellent focus on early learning, as well as support for early years providers, leads to above-average attainment on entry to school for those children who have attended this centre.
- Strong partnerships with health, employment and other agencies enable the centre to provide support that is tailored to meet families' individual needs. Health outcomes are very good.
- Parents benefit significantly from well-planned parenting courses. These develop parents' skills and understanding to enable parents to be more effective in their personal lives and in their interaction with their children.
- Users and professionals alike greatly praise the positive impact that the centre's services have on families' and children's lives. Staff are skilled at pinpointing the needs of individuals and enabling them to build on their strengths.
- Strong leadership and management are the driving forces behind the centre's good quality practice and services. The local authority provides very good support and monitoring for the able centre manager. This ensures the centre is continually targeting and improving the quality of its work.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough parents are taking up courses to improve their English and mathematics skills.
- The systems for evaluating the overall impact of adult education courses on improving families' lives are not sufficiently developed.
- Some new members of the advisory board have yet to receive training. Consequently, the board is not providing sufficient challenge to the centre's leadership team.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the levels of participation in English and mathematics courses to support the progression of adults into employment.
- Ensure leaders and managers evaluate the impact of adult learning programmes more robustly so they know how effective these are in supporting families in their well-being and employability.
- Ensure new members of the advisory board are given immediate training for their roles, so that the board can increase its level of challenge and support to the centre's leadership and management team.

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 education and health services, adult learning, employment and voluntary organisations.

The inspectors visited a range of services including Stay and Play, Drop-In for Childminders and Children, Southsea Adventures and Multicultural Group for Women and Children.

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
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Additional inspector
Peter Towner	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Southsea and Brambles Children's Centre is a standalone centre. It was formed in September 2013 when Southsea Children's Centre and Brambles Children's Centre were merged. The main hub operates from premises within Havelock Community Centre, where most activities are held. Activities are also held at St Simon's Church, Waverley Road, Southsea, and Church of the Holy Spirit, Fawcett Road, Southsea. Most venues are within approximately one mile of Havelock Community Centre and are easily accessed from all the areas it serves. Parents and carers are also able to attend neighbouring children's centres within easy reach, as well as those held further afield in Portsmouth.

The centre 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 Southsea area. Southsea and Brambles Centre has its own advisory board and parent forum.

There are approximately 1,850 families with children under five in the area served by the centre. Most are White British, although just over a quarter are of minority ethnic origin. These families are mostly mixed race White and Black African, Eastern European and Asians from Bangladesh, India and other parts of Asia. The area is very mixed socially and economically, with pockets of deprivation. Sixteen per cent of children under the age of five are living in workless households, which is broadly average. A small minority of families claim working tax credit. Most children in the area start their early years provision at levels below those that are typical for their age, although this varies.

The centre has identified those requiring particular support are children in greatest need, families living in the least advantaged areas, teenage and young parents, lone parents, minority ethnic families and male carers. Services provided by the centre include family support, health services, parenting programmes, family play sessions and childminder support groups.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Registration and participation rates have increased over the last two years and most families, including those expecting children, are registered. Overall, registrations currently stand at 84%. The large majority of families, including those in workless households and other priority groups, are now making wide use of the services provided by the centre and its partners.
- Strong partnerships with health professionals, including weekly antenatal and healthy child clinics at the centre, encourage most families to register. This is enhanced through robust partnership meetings where a range of professionals, including health and social care colleagues, meet to discuss the needs of families in the area.
- Those identified as needing extra support gain swift access to highly effective help. This includes families living with domestic violence, alcohol and substance misuse, isolation, mental health issues, financial crises and complex needs.
- Over the past year, the centre has greatly improved opportunities for families to regularly access career advice from Jobcentre Plus. This has had a positive impact on improving families' overall registration and participation rates in a wider range of activities. The Jobcentre Plus representative spends four days each week at nearby centres and high quality crèche facilities are provided for those attending meetings or training, if needed.
- Staff from employment, education, health and social services ensure that families are aware of the wider range of services provided by the centre. Lone parents' participation rates, at 88%, have risen markedly through involvement with Jobcentre Plus across a wide range of services. However, too few parents have enhanced their employability by taking courses to improve their English and mathematics skills.

- The centre provides particular courses and events to suit families' needs. For example, the centre introduced a weekly Multicultural Group for Women and Children, in response to the cultural sensitivities of some families. English language courses, including those for a Russian group, have increased participation rates for families speaking English as an additional language.
- The centre has been proactive in supporting families to access free early education and almost all three- to four-year-olds take this up. Although the large majority of eligible families now take up the opportunity for two-year-olds, staff are working hard to increase this further by sensitively overcoming some of the cultural barriers.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre provides a wide range of courses and activities to help families improve their health, education, employment and overall life chances. There is a good balance of services open to all families and one-to-one support is given for target families.
- Parents comment very positively about the impact of the care, support and guidance they receive. Parents in most need of support benefit from courses and one-to-one support in the home to increase their parenting skills and their ability to cope with the demands of a young family.
- High-quality case files are maintained due to robust quality assurance systems. Case files demonstrate the good progress made by families receiving support, both in the home and in the centre. As a result, inequalities are reducing for these families.
- The centre successfully promotes healthy lifestyles through courses such as Healthy Wraps and Fruit Kebabs, Asian Healthy Eating and Use of Outdoor Space for Physical Activities.
- Many health-related activities are developed through very effective partnerships with health services. Due to the centre's effective provision, the rates for sustained breastfeeding at six to eight weeks are better than in the rest of the country and Portsmouth, whilst obesity rates are lower. Immunisation rates are rising and are slightly better than national averages.
- The centre's partnerships with early years providers, including childminders, are excellent. Children who access services are very well prepared for school. Very thorough systems to track and monitor the impact of the centre's work show that the attainment of those who have attended the centre is rising. In 2014, it was above national levels, with both boys and girls doing far better than in the past.
- The achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children is narrower than national figures. It is closing faster for those who attended the centre than those who did not. High-quality learning sessions successfully promote the development of children's communication and language skills and their personal, social and emotional development through stimulating play. Outstanding demonstration of skills by children's centre staff, for example during Stay and Play and Childminder Drop-In, promotes excellent learning for children, parents and carers.
- The centre's popular volunteer programme works well. This ensures the centre benefits from having regular support, including Southsea Adventures where male accredited volunteers help to enhance the learning of boys. Case studies show that volunteer programmes support future employability well.
- A good range of adult education courses is made available to families. The numbers taking courses and actively seeking employment have risen significantly since families were given ready access to employment services. However, the centre has not been as successful in helping adults to develop their English and mathematics skills.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Strong and self-critical leadership ensures the centre's performance is improving. The enthusiastic staff are well led by an able centre manager who shows strong determination to move the centre forward.
- The local authority provides very effective support and rigorous monitoring through annual reviews

and regular visits. Targets are set which challenge the centre to do better. These processes work in conjunction with the centre's own self-evaluation. Effective staff supervision, performance management and training support the team's continuous improvement.

- Self-evaluation and targets emphasise the reduction of inequalities. The impact can be seen, for example, in the success of the systems to improve the learning and attainment of boys on entry to school. Male carers, who are often working full or part time, are now involved in a wider range of centre activities. This is due to the centre increasing adult evening courses and providing opportunities for Dad's Saturday Stay and Play with their children.
- The centre carefully analyses the benefits of adults undertaking work-related courses for their impact on individual families' lives. However, it does not routinely evaluate the impact of different courses. Consequently, it has not identified the need for more adults to improve their English and mathematics skills in order to enhance their employment prospects.
- There are robust safeguarding and recruitment arrangements and staff have received relevant training. Policies and procedures to promote safeguarding meet requirements and staff understand these. Children subject to a child protection plan, children in need or helped by the family support process receive well-integrated support. Parents are made aware of the risks associated when using computers and social media.
- The local authority has overall governance of the centre, although the advisory board and the parents' forum are carefully interlinked in the process of holding the centre to account. These groups, made up of key professionals, partners and parents, bring a range of experience and expertise.
- The parents' forum is well represented by different sections of the community. Parents have good opportunities to put forward their views, suggest improvements and shape services.
- The advisory board has a good overview of the centre's performance and knowledge of where further improvement is required to reduce any inequalities. However, several members have been recently appointed and have not yet received training for their roles. Therefore, their capacity to challenge is not as secure as it should be.
- Finances and resources are used well. The centre is well resourced at Havelock Community Centre and at satellite locations. Staff expertise is used very effectively across the three centres in the locality to meet families' needs. Specialist professionals, such as the advisory teacher and the speech and language therapist for the locality, are deployed most effectively for enhancing the quality of early years provision at 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	22802
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	455070
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,850
Centre leader	Laura Biggs
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	023 9282 6303
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