

# Inspection report for Outlooks Children's Centre

---

|                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Local authority     | Dorset                 |
| Inspection number   | 361883                 |
| Inspection dates    | 9–10 June 2010         |
| Reporting inspector | Margaret Dickinson HMI |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Centre governance           | Action for Children on behalf of the local authority |
| Centre leader               | Jill Cooley  |
| Date of previous inspection | n/a  |
| Centre address              | Castle Road, Portland, Dorset DT5 1AU                |
|                             |  |
| Telephone number            | 01305 823794   |
| Fax number                  | n/a  |
| Email address               | Wp.childrenscentres@actionforchildren.org.uk         |

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto: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'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2010



## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with the centre's senior manager, the centre leader, front-line staff and representatives from the local authority, health and Jobcentre Plus. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

The local authority commissions Action for Children to run the centre, offering the full range of children's centre core services. It is one of four children's centres run by Action for Children in the Weymouth and Portland area. It serves the Island of Portland and the Wyke Regis area of Weymouth, one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. Families are mostly from White British backgrounds. The centre's area has some significant pockets of deprivation and levels of teenage pregnancy are particularly high compared with national figures.

The local authority has recently changed the arrangements for the main off-site day-care provider. A crèche takes place on the premises. The centre does not currently have an advisory board. Governance arrangements are through the area's Locality Team.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

### Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

|   |
|---|
| 4 |
|---|

### Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

|   |
|---|
| 4 |
|---|

## Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Outlook's Children's Centre is inadequate because it does not serve its local area as well as it should. The relatively stronger elements within the centre's work lie in the services provided for all parents and families. The on-site crèche provides good levels of care and many of the other regular sessions organised for parents are well received. Staff who run these sessions are enthusiastic and committed. They provide good role models in promoting relationships between adults and children and promote enjoyment and participation for all. Several parents reported how friendly and supportive they find the centre and the usefulness of the sessions that are provided for them.

All staff ensure there is good attention to security and there are efficient procedures for carrying out the required checks when recruiting staff and for checking the identity of visitors. As a result, parents feel safe in the centre and confident that their children are also safe to move around the centre freely.

There are several significant weaknesses that have led to the judgement on the centre's overall effectiveness. The centre leaders do not have sufficient information about the most vulnerable groups in the centre's area and their specific needs. Data are not used by the centre well enough, to measure and demonstrate the extent to which its services reach the most vulnerable groups and those at greatest risk of exclusion. The centre does not effectively target its services to support the families living in the locality who need the help most, including teenage parents.

There are some examples of good, coordinated support for individual families and some effective inter-agency working. Several case studies demonstrate improved outcomes for these families. The recently appointed centre leader is using her experience from her previous posts well to promote inter-agency working. However, at a more strategic level, the centre's work with other agencies and partners to provide an integrated and coherent service is underdeveloped. The centre does not draw upon the health visitors' knowledge of the area to target its services.

Knowledge of individual families is not being shared effectively so that support can be specifically targeted, especially for the harder to reach families who do not currently access the centre's services.

There is a lack of clarity as to how the governance arrangements work for the children's centre. The centre does not have an advisory board, a requirement which came into effect from January 2010. As a result, lines of accountability are not clearly understood and the local authority's steer is insufficiently strong to help the centre identify and support local needs. There are some isolated examples of parents' views being taken into account to introduce new activities.

Leaders' use of evaluation is weak. It is not used sufficiently to monitor the range and quality of activities that the centre organises, determine what needs to be adapted or check the reach and impact for families in the area. Where evaluation has been used to good effect is in relation to the main off-site day care provider.

The centre's action plans do not drive improvements sufficiently and are mainly a list of things that need to be done. Targets are not used effectively because the centre is not using data and other information sufficiently to evaluate its success and set future priorities. The centre does not have the capacity to improve further.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Set up an advisory board to establish clear lines of accountability and to provide challenge and support for the centre manager.
- Ensure the centre uses data more effectively to monitor the effectiveness of the centre's services in improving outcomes for children and families.
- Improve the effectiveness and use of evaluation and use the outcomes to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision, and to set priorities and targets for the centre's development plan.
- Increase leaders' knowledge of the extent and range of children's and families' needs in the area, particularly those from the most vulnerable groups, and provide targeted services to meet their needs.
- Work more closely with health workers, particularly health visitors, to improve health outcomes for children and families, including teenage parents.

## How good are outcomes for users?

|   |
|---|
| 3 |
|---|

The centre does not analyse information and data to evaluate the success and impact of its work. Evidence is therefore limited. Case studies illustrate the centre's contribution to the support of particularly vulnerable children and there is evidence of improved outcomes for individual children and families through inter-agency working.

Parents' feedback demonstrates how the centre's work is supporting them through, for example, advice on parenting and healthy eating. The questionnaires collated by the centre show specific ways in which the sessions are having an impact on children's and parents' everyday lives. Several parents, for example, noted how much better the atmosphere at home had become since participating in a parenting programme, and reported improved relationships with their children. The centre has worked with a number of families to improve safety in the home and reduce accidents by carrying out home safety checks.

Staff leading the crèche and sessions for children ensure a clear focus on the areas of learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Relationships between children are good and there is a happy atmosphere in sessions, which parents clearly appreciate. Several sessions were observed when parents and young children were enjoying playing and exploring together. Children use computers, develop their language and communication, collect and use resources and play cooperatively. Outdoor provision helps to develop children's learning and development and routines are well established to develop their independence and confidence. Links with Jobcentre Plus are limited and the centre is not able to demonstrate the extent to which parents' economic well-being is developing through training and employment opportunities.

The centre has a parents' forum which is used to involve parents in the centre's work and find out their views. There is some evidence that parents' suggestions are taken up and new sessions provided. The pushchair power sessions, for example, stemmed from parents' requests for opportunities to exercise. Parents cannot contribute formally to the governance of the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

|   |   |
|---|---|
| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles       | 3 |
| The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them                            | 3 |
| The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development  | 3 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 3 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training     | 3 |

How good is the provision?

3

The outreach worker, centre staff and early years teachers based at the centre are committed and enthusiastic and there is some effective work taking place in the

centre and the associated venues on the island and in Wyke Regis. The outreach worker promotes effectively the centre's work at venues such as supermarkets, baby clinics and breast feeding groups. A good range of activities is planned in the crèche to promote children's development, resources are used well and relationships with parents are good.

Good care and support are provided for individual families who know about the centre and access its services. The centre provides information for parents on day care in the area and supports childminders through drop-in sessions and training. It reacted well to an increased incidence of accidents in the home by setting up home visits and providing safety equipment as necessary. The weakness in provision relates to the targeting of services and the extent to which the centre identifies the needs of families and vulnerable groups who live in the area and arranges provision to improve their outcomes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users                                   | 3 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users                    | 3 |
| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community | 4 |
| The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community                    | 3 |

How effective are the leadership and management?

|   |
|---|
| 4 |
|---|

The centre's work in providing services for all is making a difference to the lives of those who use the centre's services. In this respect, the centre gives satisfactory value for money. The arrangements for safeguarding children and users are appropriate. Staff are suitably trained to support their role in ensuring users' safety, including child protection. The staff are alert to the needs of individual families who are encountering challenges and difficulties, and respond well when referrals are made. The number of people using the centre has increased since last November. However, the centre does not use the information it can access, such as attendance figures and patterns, to review its effectiveness and reach across the area. Health visitors have specific information about families who encounter severe difficulties and deprivation but it is not sufficiently accessed or used by the centre manager to provide targeted services.

The self-evaluation document prepared for the inspection outlines the provision organised by the centre. However, it lacks evaluation of the centre's impact on outcomes for children and families. Other staff associated with the centre, and its users, have limited input into the centre's self-evaluation. The development plan lacks clear targets and priorities and has significant gaps. For example, the centre's contribution to support pregnant teenagers and teenage parents is not included in its

current action plan despite this group being a priority group in the locality. Some families on the Island of Portland are reported to be hard to engage and reluctant to visit the centre due to its location, or are unable to do this due to transport difficulties. The centre's action plans do not indicate sufficiently how the centre is working to break down the barriers for these families and groups.

The arrangements for governance are not clear. The centre manager contributes to the overall locality plan through the Locality Team which provides a forum for sharing information. However, there is no advisory board in place to provide challenge and a strategic steer to the centre's work, to promote integrated working and to ensure robust accountability.

These are the grades for leadership and management

|  |   |
|--|---|
| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood                     | 4 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community           | 4 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community                            | 3 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults            | 3 |
| The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities  | 4 |
| The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide     | 3 |
| The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision    | 3 |

### Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The main off-site day care provider, used until recently, has not been inspected within the last 12 months. The findings from the provider's inspection report have therefore not been used as evidence for this inspection.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a

copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Outlooks Children's Centre on 9–10 June 2010. We judged the centre as inadequate overall.

The centre provides a range of activities for children and parents who come to the centre or to one of the other venues on Portland and in Wyke Regis. These are successful, well run sessions which children and parents enjoy. The staff who run them are enthusiastic and committed and the activities help children to learn and develop in many ways. The crèche at Outlooks is a good example. In several of the programmed sessions organised by the centre, inspectors saw children enjoying a range of activities, developing their language, social skills, confidence and independence. Several parents spoke to inspectors about how much they appreciated the centre's sessions, which bring them into contact with other parents, help to combat any isolation they are feeling and provide valuable advice. All those spoken to commented on how supportive they found the staff at the centre and how welcome they felt. Parents and children feel safe in the centre. The centre places clear priority on this and complies with the requirements for safeguarding children and users.

There are many examples of the centre staff supporting individual families, including some who are going through very challenging and difficult times. Nevertheless, there are some significant weaknesses that have led to the overall judgement on the centre's effectiveness.

- The local authority has not set up the necessary arrangements for governing the centre, to make sure that it provides the support it should and that it is making a real difference to the lives of children and families on Portland and in Wyke Regis.
- The centre leaders do not use information that the local authority and the health service hold to make sure they target their work at the children and families in the area who are facing particular difficulties and challenges and who need support and help most.
- The centre leaders do not have systems set up to review the centre's work, to check that what the centre is providing is what people need and helpful for the most needy children and families in the area.
- The centre leaders do not work closely enough with health visitors in the area.

Inspectors will come back to re-inspect the centre within a year.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).