

# Inspection report for Reckleford Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	387001
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 February 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Mann HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Jackie Ridout
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30–31 March 2011
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Reckleford Community School and Children's Centre.

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.

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**Report published:** February 2012



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## 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents, managers, representatives of the local authority and staff. They also met with a number of partners who work with the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Reckleford Children's Centre is located next to Reckleford County Infant School and Nursery. The children's centre incorporates a full day care nursery for children aged from birth to three years. This was inspected in May 2010 and judged outstanding. The centre provides the full core offer through onsite services and through signposting to services delivered through other children's centres and linked providers. The centre was first designated in March 2006 and operates as one of four children's centres within the South Somerset Cluster. The cluster manager oversees management in all four centres, and each has its own lead centre officer to provide day-to-day management. Overall governance is provided by the local authority. There is an advisory board in place that serves all four centres within the cluster. This board is made up of partners and parents to review management procedures and assist overall development.

The centre's reach includes areas with high levels of social need. The proportion of families who live in workless households and those on benefits is above the national average and much higher than the average for the local authority. The majority of families living in the reach area are of White British heritage. Within the community, a wide range of additional languages is spoken, with Polish being the most common. The proportion of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage working at the expected levels for their age is below the national and local authority averages.

## 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 families**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Reckleford Children’s Centre provides satisfactory overall effectiveness and adequately meets the needs of the local community. The centre has moved forward since its previous inspection ten months ago when it was judged to be inadequate. It has successfully addressed the main shortcomings highlighted by the previous inspection. The centre has since reorganised to a cluster way of working and now works together with three other centres. The centre manager and lead centre officer work constructively with the wider senior management team to plan and implement improvements which are focused on meeting the needs of the centre’s catchment area. The centre is working effectively to increase the engagement of Polish families who have recently moved into the reach area. In the local area, there have been a few recent incidences of racial tension. These have not manifested themselves at all in the centre. Staff are aware of local issues and work hard to promote equality within an inclusive environment. As a result, parents from different ethnic backgrounds attend groups together, and show respect for one another. The centre demonstrates inclusive practice and equality is promoted sufficiently well.

Safety of children and adults is prioritised and the outcome for staying safe and the judgement for safeguarding procedures are both good. In a recent survey, all adults said they felt safe at the centre, and they felt able to share personal information confidentially. Effective safeguarding procedures are implemented well. All staff are highly trained in recognising and acting upon safeguarding concerns. Detailed case records and action plan reviews provide frequent monitoring. Consequently, there are significantly improved outcomes for children on child protection plans and those referred as a result of robust Common Assessment Framework arrangements.

The local authority provides sound support and guidance to help increase the quality and impact of centre services. The annual conversation took place with some local authority input: the early years adviser was present for the process, and the report was overseen by local authority representatives. Reasonable targets were set for the centre following the previous inspection and the centre has met these well. For

example, the centre has increased levels of engagement so now about half of the families living in the centre's reach have some contact with its services. In those areas defined as most economically deprived, this percentage is higher which demonstrates that the centre is successful in engaging those families who are most in need of its help. Governance by the local authority has been somewhat cautious in driving essential improvement since the previous inspection. The centre is now ready for a greater level of rigorous challenge to push its development further.

The centre makes appropriate use of data available to it about the reach area to engage with as many families as it can. Staff supplement this information with knowledge gathered from liaison with partner agencies and local knowledge, as well as through outreach, so they know their area reasonably well. For some time, the local authority has been trying to access further information from health services about children born in the area. The aim of this is to help make contacts with families more promptly and consistently, to reach potentially vulnerable families and provide early support. Although discussions are taking place at present, this information is not yet available to the centre.

The advisory board performs its role sufficiently well. It is quite new, having been formed in the last ten months, and is beginning to establish its aims and objectives to advise and challenge the centre managers and so promote further development. As a result, monitoring processes are not yet embedded and the board's impact is only just beginning to have influence in shaping services and seeking best value. Parents from Reckleford and partners are now fully engaged with the board. The chair is clear about the group's purpose and meetings are becoming more focused on the needs of the centre and the local area.

In addition to those parents on the advisory board, others are involved in the centre's Think Tank forum, and a few help in sessions and groups. Several parents are keen to become more involved through a volunteer programme in order to help the centre, gain personal experience and build skills for the future. In general, the centre has effective partnerships with the key agencies such as health and social care. It has amiable partnership working with agencies such as Skills and Learning, and Jobcentre Plus, although these links are not fully used at present. As a result, most learning opportunities for adults concern parenting issues and emotional well-being, although courses often contain a small element of literacy skills as well. The challenging employment issues of the local area indicate a need for existing partnerships to be further utilised to extend adult learning opportunities.

Outcomes for families who use the centre are satisfactory overall. Managers have recently implemented systems to demonstrate the impact of the services offered, and they are continuing to review these processes through sound self-evaluation. This is ongoing and there are firm plans for future development. As a consequence, the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. These systems are beginning to provide a useful indication of how families are improving their outcomes as a result of services, but more work remains to be done.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Build on existing strategic links between the local authority and health partners to provide data that show the number of live births in the reach area in order to promote more engagement of families with the centre.
- Embed existing processes of evaluation and develop systems further to demonstrate the impact and value of services on outcomes for all target groups.
- Promote further and speed up development of the centre's work by:
  - providing more rigorous challenge of the centre's work and setting ambitious targets for improvement
  - developing the role of the advisory board further so its effectiveness continues to improve.
- Improve the economic well-being of families who use the centre by:
  - extending the range of adult learning opportunities to enhance their employability and financial stability
  - developing more opportunities for parents to participate in volunteer work at the centre.

### How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
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Families who use the centre's services find them beneficial and enjoyable. Young parents are generally well engaged with the centre through the teenage midwifery service delivered at the centre, the young parents support, and universal services such as the baby health clinic. Health outcomes are improving through these individual contacts. For example, one young parent, who has received financial and emotional support with healthy eating and exercise, evaluated the value of her contact with the centre saying, 'Honestly, if I had not come here, I don't think I would be here today.' The overall rates of sustained breastfeeding are improving. The Bosom Buddies group and partnership working with the health team provide information and support for breastfeeding women. Three parents from the centre act as peer supporters to provide further help for mothers to sustain breastfeeding.

Children and adults are developing positive relationships quite well. Some parents are involved in governance, and a reasonable proportion gave their views in the recent satisfaction survey to help influence provision. Children are happy in the onsite nursery. Those children who are more vulnerable, and in receipt of two-year-old funding, demonstrate warm relationships with staff in the nursery and are increasing their levels of self-assurance as a result.

Outcomes for enjoying and achieving are satisfactory overall but variable. Children make very good progress towards the early learning goals from their relatively low starting points, especially those who need more intervention and are in receipt of

supported childcare. Adult outcomes are less strong. Families, especially those from target groups, enjoy their contact with the centre and many attend activities regularly. As a result of attendance at groups such as those that provide resources to develop parenting skills, some have improved their understanding of positive behaviour management and general parenting skills. Adults use centre services to access advice on benefits and gain employment opportunities. A few have gone on to employment from gaining skills and experience through courses and volunteering. More parents are keen to give their time to contribute to the centre’s work, although at present there is no organised volunteer programme in place.

Families learn how to stay safe well due to the centre’s positive work. The evaluation of courses in first aid indicates significant improvement in their confidence to deal with a range of family emergencies; adults who attend Baby Explorers have an enhanced understanding of safety in the home. Those families who find themselves in the most challenging of circumstances significantly improve their parenting and general well-being through targeted individual support from family support workers and integration into centre groups such as Stay and Play. Families who suffer from domestic abuse receive individual support to improve their practical arrangements and their emotional well-being. Children subject to a child protection plan and those involved with the Common Assessment Framework process make good progress because of the well-organised approach of dedicated staff and effective multi-agency working.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>3</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**3**

Provision for all users of the centre is satisfactory. Sessions provided for children are of a higher quality and have better impact than the range provided for adults. The early years advisory team has a positive impact on improving the quality of early

years provision throughout the reach area. The onsite nursery provision for children aged under three years delivers very high quality provision to those children who are most vulnerable and access the two-year-old funded supported childcare. Recent initiatives have produced planning for family sessions and groups. This planning combines the Every Child Matters outcomes with the areas of learning from the Early Years Foundation Stage to provide a robust framework for activities. Use of this is beginning to improve the learning outcomes in many sessions such as Stay and Play. Here parents are encouraged to try 'messy' creative play with the children, as well as sharing ideas and receiving advice on childcare matters such as sleeping issues.

The well-targeted help outreach and family support staff give to families in need makes a noticeable difference to their overall outcomes. In particular, the focus on promoting safety for these families leads to good safety outcomes. Adults who receive this support from staff value it greatly. One parent made the positive comment that she and her family 'wouldn't be where we are without them'. Adults with disabilities receive some tailored provision that enables them to use the centre. Staff give emotional and practical assistance to help them make the most of services they need. For example, adults receive practical help with parking at the centre, and enjoy the caring contact with staff. The centre is always accessible to parents. Practical advice is given to meet parents' and carers' emotional needs and well-being and as a result these adults feel that staff at the centre 'go above and beyond' their expectations to give help.

Adults and children who speak English as an additional language receive appropriate support in translation and are helped to learn English. Translation services are provided and specialist classes are available. Managers and staff have a clear view of the priority groups of the area. They assess the needs of those who live in the local area satisfactorily and use the centre to provide an appropriate range of services. However, there are some small but significant gaps in their knowledge of families living in the area, such as live births, and this impairs a comprehensive assessment of the needs of all target groups.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective are the leadership and management?**

**3**

Centre leaders have focused their efforts appropriately on rectifying the weaknesses



flagged by the previous inspection. As a result, the centre is effective in meeting the needs of, and improving outcomes for, the majority of families in its reach area. The cluster arrangement provides a wider senior management team as all managers are included. This provides a useful forum for debate and ensures services are not duplicated unnecessarily across the area to provide satisfactory value for money. There are already processes in place that indicate the impact of services, and managers have plans in place to develop these further. Improvement is based on sound evaluation and realistic planning. Evaluation of the provision is sound and accurate, and is leading to appropriate development planning and improvement. The local authority provides satisfactory governance and through the annual conversation it holds the centre to account. However, the next step targets arising from this discussion have not been sufficiently challenging. The main priority currently is to gather all available data to ensure that a comprehensive analysis of local needs can take place for all target groups. The managers and the local authority are aware of what needs to be done to raise levels of engagement and they are in discussion with health services to address this. The advisory board is developing its role well and protocols and meetings are increasing in purpose to enhance the effectiveness of the centre further.

The centre promotes equality and diversity adequately well. Some aspects of practice are stronger than others. For example, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are progressing rapidly. Those children with the lowest starting points are developing quickly and their achievements are catching up with the majority as a result of good-quality provision. However, not all adults are yet receiving the provision they need to increase their skills, financial stability and employability. Practice is inclusive: ante natal classes are delivered in the evenings to encourage the attendance of fathers; and the satisfaction survey was translated into Polish to ensure all users of the centre had the opportunity to give their views.

Suitable and cohesive partnership working is in place with a range of agencies, including health and social care and these are targeted to meet local needs. These arrangements have been sustained reasonably well despite the changes in centre management and reorganisation. They form a key element of centre working to provide an acceptable range of services, many of which are designed to help those families most in need. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Rigorous checks are made on adults working at the centre. All staff are trained to a high level and demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding priorities and procedures. Staff are tenacious in their engagement with external agencies to achieve improved outcomes for those children at risk of harm.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>3</b>

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

None.

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Reckleford Children's Centre on 8 and 9 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank you for welcoming us to your centre, and for speaking with us about what you think about the centre and the services it offers you and your families.

The centre has improved since its previous inspection ten months ago and now provides a satisfactory level of effectiveness. These are some of the main things we found out.

- The management of the centre is much better organised, and leaders have clear ideas of how to improve services further to meet the needs of local families.
- The advisory board is now in place. Some parents are members so that parents' views are included in discussions and decisions.

- Staff use lots of information to identify who is living in the centre's catchment area, and what support is needed. More families are using the centre than was the case last year, and the number continues to increase.
- There are appropriate arrangements for outreach work, and home visiting services are helping families to improve their daily lives.
- Safety is given a good level of priority at the centre and outcomes are good. Many of you say that you feel you can trust staff and there are lots of opportunities to learn about safety issues such as first aid and fire safety. Child protection arrangements are managed effectively by the centre because staff are well trained and procedures are well organised to keep children safe.
- Many of your young children enjoy being at the nursery and this helps them to learn successfully. Most are making very good progress in their learning and personal development.

We have asked the local authority and the centre to give priority attention to the following key aspects so that services for the area continue to improve.

- The centre is trying to make sure everyone living in the centre's local area knows about the services it offers. Senior health and local authority personnel are currently discussing ways to provide better information to help this process further, and we would like this to happen soon.
- The centre is trying to show how services make a difference to the health, safety, personal and educational achievements and overall well-being of you and your families. They sometimes ask you about your experiences on courses. We have asked them to do this more consistently so they know how successful services are.
- The centre has done well since its last inspection and we think it is ready to develop more quickly now. We have asked the local authority to give challenging support so that managers make more rapid improvements.
- The advisory board is now up and running, and some parents, and quite a few partner agencies, such as health and education, are involved in the meetings. We have suggested that the board continues to develop its role, to make its meetings efficient and to check that the centre is meeting the needs of the local community as well as it can.
- We have asked the centre to provide more opportunities for you to develop your own knowledge and skills. It can do this through providing more adult learning opportunities for those who wish learn more. Also, we would like the centre to encourage more of you to volunteer in the centre so that you can gain work experience and learn new skills that might help you into paid employment in the future.

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