

# Inspection report for Hamp Children's Centre

---

Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	362492
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

Centre governance	Somerset local authority
Centre leader	Karen Bridel
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Hamp Children's Centre Rhode Lane, Bridwater, TA6 6JB
Telephone number	01278 429273
Fax number	01278 451025
Email address	kbridel@somerset.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Hamp Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the manager of the centre, various members of staff, parents, carers and users of the centre, representatives of the local authority, and various partners, including the staff of Hamp Infant School.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection judgements

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

## Information about the centre

The centre was designated in 2005. It is attached to Hamp Infant School and shares the same site as the junior school. The centre serves a disadvantaged area of Bridgwater in Somerset, one of the most deprived areas nationally. The local population is predominantly of White British backgrounds. The proportion of adults that are unemployed is higher than the national average and debt is a significant factor in many households. A high proportion of children belong to lone parent families and 23.3 per cent of children live in households that claim workless benefits, with 12.4 per cent of parents claiming the childcare element of Working Tax Credits. Health tends to be poor, with a high incidence of smoking combined with poor nutrition and a higher than average number of hospital admissions. Substance misuse through drugs and alcohol is prevalent. Recent data shows that 24.1 per cent of children in the Reception class are overweight or obese, of which 10.7 per cent are obese. There is a high proportion of children on child protection plans within the local area.

The local authority provides the overall governance of the centre but there is no advisory board. The centre offers all elements of the core offer and provides a full range of integrated services for children and their families. Early Years Foundation Stage in both the centre nursery and in the school maintained nursery are managed by Hamp Infant School. Attainment on entry to the nurseries is low, particularly in language skills but also in terms of children’s personal, social and emotional development.

**Overall effectiveness**

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

**3**

**Capacity for sustained improvement**

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

**3**

**Main findings**

Hamp Children’s Centre satisfactorily provides for the children and their families in its area. Many of the centre’s activities focus successfully on developing parenting skills in the local families, which are having a positive impact on developing parents’ confidence and the security of their children. It is a busy centre and the registered users often access many of the services on offer. The number of families that make use of these services, however, is only a small proportion of the families in the reach area and this is why the provision and the outcomes for children and their families is judged as satisfactory overall. The centre has started to identify strategies for making contact with the harder to reach families but these have not yet been successfully implemented. Outreach activities provide good levels of support. The needs of vulnerable families are successfully identified by health visitors, and the family support workers. Volunteers from the Home Start charity and the work of the Barnardo’s team are very successful in providing guidance and advice in the families’ own homes. Many parents commented on the good levels of advice: ‘Staff are friendly’, ‘they are good at listening as well as giving advice and support’ and ‘they have given me the confidence to join other groups’ were many of the comments from parents and carers.

All families, irrespective of their backgrounds and ethnicity, are welcomed into the centre, and their participation in activities is encouraged. The staff are very active in working with other agencies in supporting families where there are child protection plans. The provision for children identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and appropriate agencies are fully involved in identifying and supporting the needs of these children and their families.

Day-to-day management of the centre is smooth. The centre staff work together as a committed and effective team but there are significant weaknesses that make governance unsatisfactory overall. The manager has tried to establish an advisory board but this has not been successful and the centre does not benefit from the

regular advice, support and challenge of an outside body. The centre has a number of strong partnerships with outside providers who work with centre staff to provide a positive range of integrated services. Communications between these partners and the centre are good and time is given to evaluating the effectiveness of activities and discussing ways to improve. Partnership with the infant school which manages the Early Years provision, however, is weak. Relationships are strained and communications, although improving, are not sufficiently effective in enabling a positive dialogue to take place. There is insufficient focus on working together in discussing how the outcomes for children and their families can be improved. This weakness in partnership creates real difficulties for the staff in the centre because it limits the areas in which they can develop some of their work, particularly in the effective use of the centre building and ensuring details of support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are shared and understood.

Senior leaders in the centre have a good understanding of the strengths of the services provided and they are well aware of the areas in which they need to further improve and evolve. The systems by which they are able to judge long-term outcomes of their work are not yet fully developed. However, the progress they have made in extending activities to local villages in the reach area and the good procedures for ensuring the safety of users and in providing activities with a wider appeal are evidence of their satisfactory capacity for improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Develop strong lines of communication with infant school staff that will ensure that services to improve the outcomes for children and their families are successfully explored and implemented.
- Establish an advisory board that is able to support, advise and challenge the centre so it can continue to improve.
- Develop effective systems for extending the centre's activities to meet the needs of hard to reach families.

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>3</b>
----------

The centre provides well for the safety of its users, and the outcomes for children and their families who use the centre are good. The other outcomes for children and their families are satisfactory but within each there are strengths as well as weaknesses. The centre has been successful in improving parents' and carers' understanding of the importance of developing healthy eating routines and the course on creating healthy meals on a budget was well attended. As part of the 'Triple P' courses, parents are helped to develop a good understanding of the needs of their children and many parents seek support on developing good bedtime routines so that children get the sleep they need. The centre responded to the parents' wish for a course on first aid and this was also well received. The Healthy Baby Clinics run by local health professionals provide a good forum to discuss

individual mothers' concerns and promote aspects of dental health and weaning and the importance of healthy eating. The emotional health of parents and carers is well supported. All families who come in contact with centre staff are well supported and they are encouraged to access the different activities, with the result that many commented how much more confident they feel to meet new people and are developing self-esteem that enables them to make positive decisions for themselves. Opportunities for parents and/or carers to understand how to limit obesity within their families or to stop smoking are aspects that the centre has focused upon; however there has been limited impact in these areas.

The centre makes good provision for the safety of all the users and for the children. Good safeguarding systems are carried out effectively and the centre building is safe and secure. Staff model safe practices and the outreach activities support individual families in understanding how to keep their children safe. The common assessment framework is used effectively where the need is identified by health visitors or family support workers. The use of local groups such as 'ARCHIE' and 'MAISEY' are developed effectively to ensure that the needs of the child and their families are correctly assessed and appropriate agencies involved. Those who have a child protection plan are well supported by the centre staff and any incidents that are of concern are quickly and effectively followed up with other appropriate agencies.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage generally behave well and show interest in their activities. They are enabled to make good progress from their low levels of knowledge and skills when they enter the nursery. Despite this effective progress in all areas of their development and learning, attainment remains below that expected for their age at the end of the Reception Year. Parents who access the various courses provided and attend regularly achieve the outcomes to which they aspire and several, building on this success, enrol in other courses as they are provided. Support for parents and carers who want to get back into employment is effectively provided by the Shaw Trust worker, although the number of adults involved has been very small given the high incidence of unemployment in the area. However, all those who have looked for support have been effectively supported in gaining new skills, and understanding of how to apply for jobs. Several are now back in work with this support, others are attending interviews and one, after training at the local college to which she was introduced, is trying to start her own business.

Parents are encouraged to comment on the activities and to suggest new ideas. A few attended the first of the Parent Forum meetings but there has only been limited success so far in getting parents and carers to contribute to the development of the centre and to help promote its effectiveness.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<p><b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>
---	-----------------

<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 users 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 users 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 are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>3</b>

### **How good is the provision?**

<b>3</b>
----------

Senior leaders use a variety of information to help them assess the needs of families and children in the area. The development of parenting skills has been accurately identified as the key focus for the centre's activities and the provision in this area is good both in the centre and as part of the outreach activities. Some aspects of healthy lifestyles are not developed as effectively as they could be, however, because they are often an incidental part of the activities provided. Raising an awareness of how to keep their children safe at home, for example, is dealt with if it is identified as an issue for a family or as part of a national raising awareness programme. Recently, the 'stay and play' session used road safety week as a focus for their activities. Similarly, leaflets about stopping smoking are often available but there has been no concerted effort in helping parents to understand the implications of smoking or trying to give up.

Families' individual needs are identified effectively by the health visitors who signpost the parents and carers to the centre's activities, for example the parent and toddler activities and the breastfeeding group or any other of the services available which will provide additional support and advice. In those cases where mothers feel unable to attend, and yet it is recognised that help is required, the centre is informed so that appropriate levels of support can be provided. The Home Start charity or staff from Barnardo's or staff from the centre are deployed, depending on the levels of need. When it is recognised that a family is in crisis, help is provided immediately and other agencies involved as required.

The senior leaders use the data provided by the local authority about families in the reach area to identify issues of concern. For example, it is recognised that locally there are health issues caused by high levels of smoking, alcoholism and obesity but there is little active focus on supporting families in these aspects because staff time is used primarily on supporting the development of parenting skills. Those families who enquire at the centre or who are identified by the various partners are well supported in these aspects. Good support is also provided for any child or adult who is identified as having additional or special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good partnership with other agencies and, when necessary, social services are an important part of this support. Contact with the wider community is, however,

underdeveloped. The senior leaders have identified the importance of contact with midwives and local pre-school groups in this process of making contact with hard to reach families but this has not been implemented successfully. Activities for childminders have, however, proven successful. The centre provides a venue for the sharing of ideas and for the children to meet with other children and for them to participate in fun activities that extend their language and creative skills. Secure crèche facilities at the centre enable parents and carers to attend courses and meetings without the worry of the care for their children.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**3**

The centre is a safe and secure environment in which parents, carers and children enjoy participating in the activities provided. Relationships between the centre staff and the registered users are positive and trusting. All appropriate checks are made on the staff and they are effectively trained in the identification of concerns about possible abuse and physical or emotional neglect. Procedures for identifying issues of concern are well developed and appropriately recorded and reported.

All families, irrespective of their backgrounds and ethnicity, are welcomed into the centre and their participation in activities is encouraged. The proportion of minority ethnic groups is not large and the centre does not provide services particularly for the families of other backgrounds, but ensuring equality and diversity is a clear focus. The few families who do attend are given satisfactory levels of support with English if it is required. The staff are very active in working with other agencies in supporting families where there are child protection plans. The provision for children identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and appropriate agencies are fully involved in identifying needs of the children and their families. Although not directly involved, the centre also provides a space for supervised meetings between parents and looked after children.

Governance of the centre is inadequate because although the day-to-day management of the centre is effective, there is no overview that ensures the centre's good improvement. The local authority provide good levels of support for the manager of the centre and, recognising the difficulties of establishing an advisory board, has set up a stakeholders group that will provide the support, advice and challenge that is missing until such a board is in place. It has yet to meet and the



first steps in trying to establish an advisory board are also not planned until the beginning of next year. The centre is a busy establishment in which staff are well deployed. Senior leaders at all levels show initiative and seek ways to improve the services they provide. Additional funding is found to support the different activities and in this way the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Systems for professional development and training of staff are successful in developing skills and expertise. Good working arrangements with the vast majority of partners enable the centre staff to review their work and to seek ways to further develop their services, but this effective partnership is missing in the relationships with staff that manage the Early Years Foundation Stage provision, so limiting the opportunities for improvement. Centre staff are all involved in evaluating the work of the centre and suggesting ways to improve their activities. Systems for using these evaluations to identify the impact of their work and to develop an overall plan for the future is still in the early stages of development and so their capacity for improvement, although satisfactory overall, needs further strengthening for good progress to be made.

*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>4</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

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

The report of the Section 5 inspection of Hamp Infant School that took place in March 2010.

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 Hamp Children's Centre on 24 and 25 November 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. During the inspection, we talked with parents, staff, partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak to us to share your thoughts about the centre.

All of you we spoke to told us how much you enjoyed using the centre. It has made a big difference in the lives of many children and their families. For example, families who have difficulties are well supported and directed to different people who can help. They are given good support, especially if managing their children's behaviour is a difficulty or a child has special needs. These families make good progress in developing a range of strategies that help the family work together. The centre works well with its partners to deliver services such as health and to help users access employment and further education. You told us you found the course on making healthy food on a limited budget and the first aid course really helpful and you enjoy fun activities for parents and children to enjoy together. The centre is effective at making sure that children and families are safe when visiting the setting and children are protected well. You told us that you find the staff at the centre very friendly and welcoming. This was our view as well.

The centre runs smoothly and staff work together as an effective team. It works well with the registered users and many enjoy the courses provided. Activities are well planned so that services are targeted to users most in need. Staff know there are many families that they have not yet been in contact with to find out how they too can be supported and we have asked the centre to find ways of reaching out to these families. The centre staff have a satisfactory understanding of what they do well and how to improve further. Staff have good ideas on how they want to improve the centre but know they need to find more ways of evaluating what they do and the impact it has on families and their children. Staff ask you for your ideas but as yet few parents are active in supporting the development of the centre and there is no advisory board to help support and advise the centre staff. Most partners work very well with the staff of the centre to explore ways of improving their services but systems for communicating with the staff of the infant school are not as effective. This slows discussion on how the provision for young children and the families can

be improved. We have asked that communications between the centre and the infant school are strengthened and that an advisory board is established as soon as possible so the centre can continue to improve.

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