

# Inspection report for Tamar FOLK Children's Centre

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Local authority	Plymouth City Council
Inspection number	363506
Inspection dates	November 2010
Reporting inspector	Jane Burchall HMI

Centre governance	Plymouth City Council
Centre leader	Ernie Edgcumbe
Date of previous inspection	This is the centre's first inspection
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Earlybirds Pre-School

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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 additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the centre's management group, the local authority, the management committee, partnership agencies, members of staff and users of the centre.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

## Inspection judgements

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

### Information about the centre

Tamar FOLK Children’s Centre developed from a Sure Start Local Programme and is governed by Plymouth City Council. It serves the St Budeaux, Barne Barton, Kings Tamerton and Weston Mill areas of Plymouth. It was designated as a phase 1 children’s centre in 2006 and offers the full range of core offer services. Early years and childcare provision is offered by a private provider, Earlybirds Pre-School, and is sited in the main children’s centre building. The centre is run on a daily basis by a manager supported by an advisory board made up of a range of parties including parents.

The centre serves a densely populated urban area which is one of the 30% most disadvantaged. The local population is mostly White British families with much smaller percentages of other minority ethnic groups. The area has few employment opportunities and, when compared with other centres in the county, a higher than average proportion of families are dependant on workless benefits.

#### Overall effectiveness

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

**2**

#### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

### Main findings

Tamar FOLK Children’s Centre provides good support to children and families accessing its services and, as a result, outcomes for users are good. This is because staff work well as a team and with partner agencies in order to provide well-integrated and cohesive services and because staff and management have a good understanding of what the centre does well and what needs further development. The centre manager provides a strong lead to the centre’s work and development. Inspectors agree with staff that they have ‘good leadership from an enthusiastic manager’. Effective steps have been taken to improve service delivery and to identify areas for development over the past nine months since the manager took up post. For example, to further improve services, the manager recently introduced a system to improve the way staff evaluate and develop services in line with users’ feedback. However, this system is very much in its infancy and is not yet sufficiently embedded in the work of the centre.

Users speak highly of the encouragement they receive from staff in the centre. They report that 'staff are really supportive', 'they go out of their way to help' and 'they never criticise and are always positive'. In times of difficulty, staff are particularly supportive. For example, they telephone users who have not visited the centre as frequently as usual in order to ensure their well-being. Users fully appreciate the care and attention staff pay to them and say that it is 'good to know someone is there for you'. Good relationships between staff and parents are evident. Parents value the welcome they receive from the reception as they enter the building; this instils confidence in them to seek help, advice and guidance.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable users is given good attention. The centre is a safe place to visit as staff are very alert to safety and security. Good systems to monitor those who visit the centre ensure the safety of children and their parents. Families subject to child protection plans are provided with a very good package of support in order to protect children and improve their home experiences. Centre staff have had some impact on improving the health of the children in their reach area. However, programmes to reduce the rate of obesity in young children and to increase the numbers of children living in smoke-free households are not currently having sufficient impact.

Users are extremely well supported to develop the necessary skills and confidence which enable them to either return to education or return to the workplace. Many users are successful in gaining recognised qualifications such as first aid and National Vocational Qualifications. Many users express their desire to become more involved in the services that are delivered by the centre and volunteer their time to do so. Through good support and training provided by staff, users make a very positive contribution to their community.

Users play a significant part in improving the quality and suitability of services; they are involved in the management of the centre and their views are appropriately sought. For example, young parents are consulted on the development of services specific to them. Parents are well represented on both 'Parasol', the parent forum, and on the advisory board. They have a strong voice in the life of the centre as their contributions are valued and taken full account of.

The centre provides very good support for children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good use of the centre's additional support fund means that children with particular needs are able to access good-quality early years provision. Effective relationships with other partners such as portage and the Earlybirds special educational needs coordinator mean that children are able to access the services they need.

The centre management has a very clear understanding of what the centre needs to do to improve further. Realistic plans have been developed which take good account of these areas and link to a clear vision for the future direction of the centre. As a result, the centre has good capacity to improve further.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to develop the evaluation of services and ensure findings are used to shape service delivery in order to fully meet the needs of all users.
- Support improved healthy outcomes for users and their families by:
  - developing healthy lifestyle programmes in order to contribute further towards tackling the rising trend in childhood obesity.
  - developing further the support offered to parents to cease smoking in order to increase the percentage of smoke-free households.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>2</b>
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Health outcomes for young children and parents are satisfactory and beginning to improve. The emotional well-being of young children is given appropriate focus through the provision of support groups such as baby massage and baby signing and the onsite location of the infant mental health team. Parents have a developing understanding of what constitutes a healthier lifestyle through activities and initiatives provided by the centre. An increased percentage of mothers sustain breastfeeding in order that their baby is given the best nutritional start. Others learn about how to provide their families with a healthy diet when they attend the 'Why Weight Matters' course and parents and children exercise together in the 'Jump and Jive' session. Staff provide a role model for healthy eating by the provision of healthy snacks. However, opportunities provided by the centre are not extensive enough or sufficiently coordinated to have a positive impact upon the numbers of obese young children in the reach area, which remain high and are increasing. The percentage of mothers who smoke in pregnancy has decreased over time, although there remains a very high percentage of children who live in homes where household members smoke.

Parents and children benefit from health and safety training and home safety risk assessments. Parents learn how to minimise risks and, coupled with the provision of free or affordable safety equipment, children are kept safer in their homes. While in the centre, parents' and children's safety is enhanced as robust risk assessments are maintained. Parents recognise the benefits of the security systems in place in order to keep them and their children safe. Children learn about how to keep themselves safe as staff arrange for visitors to attend the groups. For example, the fire department visited to talk about fire safety around bonfire night and the community public health officer talked to children about safety in the sun.

Parents and children learn together in an environment which is fun and exciting. An increased percentage of children achieve a good standard of attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage due to an appropriate focus on developing children's language and communication skills and their social skills. Children's transition into school is supported well by a cohesive approach taken by staff who

work well with local schools. Parents’ ability to interact effectively and communicate with their children is developed through the provision of relevant training and group activities. For example, verbal and non-verbal communication is enhanced at the baby signing sessions.

Many parents report improved levels of confidence enabling them to access further education, in turn supporting their child’s learning. For example, several have completed National Vocational Qualifications in child care and others have attended literacy and numeracy classes in order to improve their basic skills. Parents confirm that they are fully involved in the development of service provision. The parents’ forum has been very proactive in identifying gaps in service provision and ways in which to bridge these gaps. Parents report that they truly feel as though they have a voice and are taken seriously.

Users also report that the support they have been given from the children’s centre has provided them with confidence and skills to apply for work. Many achieve improved economic stability due to the effective advice, guidance and information they are given relating to employment and training opportunities. Effective debt counselling and good benefit advice has resulted in users being able to improve their economic well-being and take responsibility for their financial independence.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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, and 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>2</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>2</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 and employment.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**2**

Centre management and staff know their community well. They make good use of the data that is available to them in order to identify and understand the needs of their community. This includes data provided by the health authority as well as recently improved local authority data. Staff have been successful in reaching a good proportion of families with young children in their reach area and information gathered on registration is used well in order to ensure users are provided with relevant services. Staff work well with other agencies in order to address the needs of individual families. Managers are rightly prioritising a need for staff to fully embed Common Assessment Framework processes in order to ensure consistency in

assessment.

The centre promotes purposeful learning and development. Users are encouraged to recognise the skills they already possess and build upon these in order that they develop as individuals. They undertake both family learning and accredited training in order to improve their family experiences and to improve their skills for employment. Users report that contact and support provided by the centre has raised the aspirations and expectations they have for themselves and their families.

Very good relationships exist with a range of key partners; for example, health, local schools, local adult education providers and debt and benefit advisors. This means that a wide range of well-integrated services are provided in accordance with the needs of the community. In particular, centre staff have a very close working relationship with the commissioned early years provider. They work extremely well together in order to provide a cohesive service to parents and young children. Most of the centre's activities are well attended, although a forced change of venue for the 'Chatterbox Group', which operated at Barne Barton, resulted in a significantly reduced rate of attendance. Centre staff are actively seeking to secure a solution; in the interim they have increased the level of outreach provision to this area in order to provide continuity of service delivery. Outreach services engage a range of families, including those most vulnerable in the community. Young parents are offered good support during pregnancy and in the early days of parenthood from the 'Malezi worker'.

Users are provided with good care, guidance and support, which they value highly. Families are confident that they can turn to centre staff in times of crisis. For example, parents can access support with child care and other costs through the additional support fund. On occasion, staff have provided parents with free child care in times of family crisis.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</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?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre is well led by a manager who has a clear vision and is passionate about providing users with good-quality services. He shares this vision and passion with his newly developed senior leadership team and inspires the whole staff team. Clear line



management arrangements mean that staff are well supported. Good systems in place ensure that staff are provided with regular supervision and an annual appraisal. Their continuing professional development needs are well supported as they are encouraged to gain recognised qualifications relevant to their role. Comprehensive induction programmes in place for newly appointed staff ensure they are fully equipped to undertake their role.

Senior leaders communicate high expectations to all staff and users. For example, they are clear with staff of the need to measure the impact that services have on outcomes for users. Overall staff and management have a good understanding of the strengths of the setting and the areas that require further improvement. A realistic action plan is in place to improve the children's centre. Good levels of challenge provided by the local authority, the advisory board and the parents' forum ensure managers drive improvement in line with the needs of the community and national expectations. While centre staff evaluate the courses they run and the groups they offer, they do not yet make sufficient use of this information in order to further improve services. The centre highly values its strong links with a range of other agencies, with whom they work closely to meet the needs of users and their families. Good communication and close working ensures all agencies are clear about priorities and work towards common goals.

The environment is welcoming and safe and accommodation is used well to provide a good range of services. Staff are well deployed to ensure the most vulnerable children are well supported and good use is made of staff's skills to enhance service delivery. Children's well-being is effectively safeguarded due to the high attention both staff and management place upon safeguarding issues. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and are provided with a comprehensive 'toolkit' of information to guide their practice. Staff are confident about who they should turn to if they have a concern about a child in their care or the practice of a member of staff. Safeguarding training is offered to parents in order that children are more effectively safeguarded. Good procedures in place ensure those who are in contact with children are suitable. A comprehensive single central register is held and staff refer to this appropriately in order to ensure all those working in the centre are suitable.

Staff work hard to provide an inclusive service. For example, the provision of free crèche facilities means that users are able to access a range of services. Good allocation of funds means that some of the most vulnerable children are able to access quality early education, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. While the ethnic make-up of the community is not diverse, staff celebrate differing cultures and religions by ensuring activities reflect a range of festivals. Members of the advisory board are proactive at reflecting the views of fathers; however, staff recognise the need to engage fathers more in the life of the centre and are due to consult with fathers on what services they would like. Overall, parents report that they feel fully involved in the life of the centre due to the fact that staff are approachable and welcoming.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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 Tamar FOLK Children's Centre on 17 and 18 November 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

We found that Tamar FOLK Children's Centre provides you and your children with good support. The centre manager leads the staff team very well and they all work well together to provide you with a good range of services. Even though the manager has only been at the centre for nine months, he has worked hard to improve things for you all and to work out what else he and the staff need to do to make sure the centre helps you even more. Staff ask you what you think of the groups and activities you attend and we have asked them to make sure they make better use of the information they gather to improve what they do.

We agree with you that the staff go out of their way to help you and are always there to listen to you when you need someone to talk to. They have developed some very strong partnerships with other professionals and organisations so that they can offer you the correct support, advice and guidance. They are very helpful when you and your families are facing difficulties, for example by funding child care places to provide you with time to deal with emergency situations. It is clear that you and the staff have good relationships. They provide particularly good support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

We were impressed with the strong contribution you make to the running of the centre and the services it offers. You are well represented on both the advisory board and the parent forum; staff and management listen to and value your ideas. Many of you are keen to offer something back to the centre and volunteer your services in a range of ways. You are successful in gaining qualifications and receive good support in developing the skills you need in order to return to work.

Staff do all they can to make sure you and your children remain safe. The centre is a safe place to visit because of the good security systems and the fact that staff make sure they prevent accidents. They also work closely with you to help you to make your homes as safe as possible. Staff are well trained in how to safeguard children and management have taken the correct steps to ensure that anyone who works with you and your children is suitable. Staff support you and your families to improve your health and it is clear that some of you have taken positive steps; some of you are learning about healthy diets and how to cook nutritious meals and others have managed to give up smoking. We have asked the centre to now help more of you to take these positive steps.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts about the centre. We wish you well with all you do in the future.

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