

# Inspection report for Sydenham Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset County Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	384148
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2011
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Bridgwater College Childcare Centre

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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 the cluster manager, the centre's management team, the local authority, the advisory board, partnership agencies, members of staff and families using the centre.

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

## Information about the centre

The centre building was built in 1999 as a result of a Single Regeneration bid. It was originally run by a Trust in cooperation with the local community and the local authority. Primarily, it ran as a family centre with strong links to children's social care. In 2005 it became a phase 1 children's centre with Bridgwater College Childcare Centre. Through recent local authority restructuring the centre became the hub of the Sedgemoor 2 Children's Centre Cluster, which includes two other children's centres. The centre is situated in one of the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country where many families are dependent on either workless benefits or low incomes.

The centre draws users from Sydenham and other parts of Bridgwater and the surrounding rural area. The vast majority of the community served by the centre is from a White British background. A small but increasing proportion of users, predominantly from eastern European backgrounds, speak English as an additional language. The centre's reach contains areas of social deprivation, poor health and lack of educational achievement.

The centre is accountable to the local authority as part of the cluster group and is governed directly by a cluster advisory board. The new cluster manager was appointed in April 2011. Since then, staffing has been restructured to work across the cluster. The lead centre officer transferred from another centre in the cluster, and has been in post since November 2011. Services are provided at the centre and the two other centres in the cluster, with some outreach services. A high proportion of the centre's activity is the provision of one-to-one support for families from target groups.

Most children enter early years provision with a lower range of skills and abilities than typically expected for their age. The centre's early years teacher works directly in Bridgwater

College Childcare Centre and all other early years provision within the reach to improve outcomes.

## 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

Sydenham Children's Centre provides satisfactory and improving support to the children and families that access its services. As a result, outcomes for families using the centre are satisfactory and are improving, particularly in terms of the achievement of children at the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre has experienced considerable change since the new governance and leadership arrangements were introduced in April 2011. The centre completed the self-evaluation process shortly after the new arrangements were introduced. A recent update demonstrates that substantial changes are being implemented. The self-evaluation process and the centre's capacity for sustained improvement are currently satisfactory. Centre leaders and managers have a good awareness of the areas that require further improvement and are working hard to achieve their aims. They are working towards identifying the sections of the community that do not at present access the services available at the centre. They plan to extend the range of services to meet the needs of families, especially those from priority groups, more effectively.

The centre is making sustained efforts to extend partnership working so that families can benefit from a broader range of expertise. The main areas that require further development of key partnerships are health and education, training and employment. For example, the centre is about to implement plans to provide employability training and job search opportunities for parents and carers. In order to implement these effectively and to further improve this aspect of provision the centre needs to extend its partnership arrangements with relevant agencies.

Parents appreciate the services that they access at the centre and are able to identify the difference that they have made to their families. Some parents are members of the advisory board or of the recently established Parents' Voice group. They actively engage in the governance of the centre or in providing services that benefit other parents and their families.

The centre is making better use of available data. However, the data provided by the local authority is incomplete, particularly with regard to key health indicators. Currently the centre

does not have access to key data, such as new births in the centre's reach.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the collection and analysis of data held by the local authority, health partners and the centre to provide a sound analysis of the needs of families within the centre's reach, particularly those from priority groups.
- Ensure that the local authority improves the effectiveness of arrangements with key partners, such as health and Jobcentre Plus, so that they provide appropriate support for families, especially those from priority groups.
- Implement strategies aimed at increasing the number of families who engage with services, with a particular focus on those from priority groups who are hard to reach.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
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Many parents who use the centre are developing a satisfactory understanding of how to provide a healthier lifestyle for their families. The centre provides healthy snacks and promotes healthy lifestyles through colourful and eye-catching displays. Parent and toddler cooking sessions provide the opportunity for parents to cook balanced meals with their children and to better understand the importance of a healthy diet. Parents and children improve their fitness and physical well-being through attending Jumping Beans sessions. Staff regularly provide activities in the centre's attractive outdoor play area, which is well equipped with a range of play facilities. Many families attend the Child Health Clinic run by health professionals at the centre. The centre provides a warm and friendly atmosphere in which parents can receive professional support with health concerns. Mothers who choose to breastfeed can attend Breastfeeding Together sessions at a nearby cluster centre.

Parents say that they and their children feel very safe at the centre. A strong focus on health and safety is demonstrated by a supportively worded sign to parents displayed on the gate at the entrance to the site reminding them to keep the gate securely closed to protect their children's safety. Most children behave appropriately and parents confirm that support received from staff helps them to effectively manage their children's behaviour. The centre has clear procedures for recording and reporting child protection concerns so that the risk of harm is reduced. Children subject to a child protection plan and their families are well supported by staff in order to improve outcomes.

Children and their parents enjoy coming to the centre and have fun as they learn together. Most parents gain in confidence and self-esteem. They develop appropriate parenting skills and value the opportunity to improve their skills further. Some parents implement activities learnt at the centre in the home environment. Targeted support to providers in early years settings has led to demonstrable improvements in the outcomes of children, particularly those with the greatest need of support.

The advisory board includes parent representatives. A few parents improve their personal

development and confidence through their involvement with Parents' Voice, which runs a weekly parent and child drop-in facility and organises trips and events.

The centre advertises job vacancies and updates this information weekly through information received from Jobcentre Plus. It also displays local education and training opportunities for adults. A newly furnished room for Work Club activities is available to parents for job-search activities. The centre plans to offer a Fit for Work course in the near future. All of these initiatives are new, and it is too early to show the impact on improved progression to further learning or employment.

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>3</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?**

<b>3</b>
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The centre prioritises early intervention with families who are referred by other agencies. It works in partnership with a range of agencies to ensure the early identification and assessment of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children from other targeted groups. The implementation of these early intervention initiatives provides appropriate, and sometimes good, support for children from families identified as having specific needs. The needs of other families who access the centre are not systematically assessed. However, the centre offers appropriate support to families once their needs are identified.

The centre is working to identify families in the reach who do not access provision, in particular, hard-to-reach groups. It has an adequate understanding of families who are using the centre, but recognises that it does not have access to sufficient data to support its work in extending provision to families who do not access provision. The centre has good working relationships with health professionals but recognises that improved joint working could reach more families more effectively and extend the range of provision aimed at improving the health and well-being of families, particularly those from vulnerable groups.

Provision to help children to learn and develop is good in early years settings and has led to improved outcomes. Provision available at the centre is adequate for most families, although

the range is limited. Many courses, such as Triple P and Somerset Total Communication, are restricted to small groups of pre-identified parents. These parents benefit from small-group work and feel more at ease in this context.

The centre provides families with satisfactory levels of care, guidance and support. Families who receive one-to-one support from family support workers are contacted regularly and the family support worker liaises with other agencies on their behalf. To date, family support workers have successfully supported a few families to improve their outcomes through inter-agency working. The centre has provided limited support to help users to gain qualifications or receive financial and careers information. The centre has recognised this and is implementing plans to provide improved support, in partnership with key agencies.

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**

In the short period since the implementation of the current governance and leadership arrangements, leaders and managers have made substantial changes to staffing arrangements and the structure of provision. It is too early to identify the full impact of most of these changes. Although outcomes and provision are currently satisfactory, plans for the development of the centre are clear and appropriate. Arrangements for the accountability for the provision are satisfactory. The advisory board has been restructured to take responsibility for the development of the cluster. It has an appropriate range of members, including parents and representatives from key partners. The board, which has only met once to date, is keen to take on its responsibilities and support the development of the cluster, and the centre.

The cluster manager demonstrates clear drive and vision in moving the provision forward. Much emphasis has been placed on training senior managers and the staff to enable them to take on changed and increased responsibilities and to familiarise them with good practice in the sector. Clear roles and responsibilities for senior managers have recently been agreed and implemented, including arrangements for all staff to have appropriate supervision and guidance.

Managers have a clear direction for the centre and the development of services to meet the needs of families within the reach, particularly those from priority groups. They have clear plans to identify families within the reach who are not currently accessing the provision and aim to target priority groups through this activity. Staff are working hard to develop new partnerships and to build on those which already exist to develop and implement a wider range of services to better meet the needs of the community.

The centre aims to be inclusive in meeting the needs of the community, although it recognises that it has not yet been fully successful in engaging all groups effectively. A strong focus on celebrating Bridgwater Carnival through activities with parents and children demonstrates the centre's success in promoting local cultural identity. Good support is offered through the early identification process for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The centre's safeguarding policy meets government requirements and includes appropriate guidance for staff on reporting and recording concerns. Staff have a good awareness of the procedures and liaise appropriately with children's services. Clear procedures are implemented to check the suitability of staff to work with children prior to their appointment.

Partnerships with health professionals and Jobcentre Plus are limited but have recently improved. The centre is working towards developing these further so that the range of services meets the needs of families, particularly from target groups, more effectively. The centre is developing a number of new partnerships with the intention of serving the needs of families more effectively.

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>3</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>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected Sydenham Children's Centre on 23 and 24 November 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. We think that the centre has good potential to improve provision under the new management arrangements.

We enjoyed the opportunity to visit the centre and noticed that the centre is a welcoming and attractive place to spend time in. We understand why those of you who use the centre enjoy being there.

Since the change in management of the centre, the staff have worked hard to build positive relationships with you. We agree with you that they have improved the structure of provision and the quality of other services that the centre offers. Staff show a very strong commitment to improving the lives of all of you, in particular those of you who receive specific support from family support workers.

The centre has developed improved partnerships with professionals and organisations so that they can offer you better support, advice and guidance. It is continuing to improve these links further. Many of you have told us how much you value the support you receive and how this has made a difference to your lives. The centre is working hard to develop these partnership links further so that support for you can be improved, especially for those of you who are seeking employment. The provision is satisfactory at the moment in terms of the range of courses and services available to you. We know that the staff do all they can to support you and to keep you and your children safe.

The senior manager has shown strong leadership in developing the centre, and has a sound understanding of the centre's strengths and areas to develop. The centre managers have a good understanding of how to improve the services available to you further. Some of you are involved in the development of the centre, either as members of the advisory board or as members of Parents' Voice. It is important that more of you are involved in making direct contributions to the management of the centre and in helping to identify how services should be developed.

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