

Inspection report for Hanham Children's Centre

Local authority	South Gloucestershire
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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.

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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 local authority, centre staff, partner agencies and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies and the minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

Hanham Children's Centre is one of a cluster of five children's centres based in South Gloucestershire. It is located on a shared site with a youth services centre and operates services from a multi-purpose room and a community space in a nearby primary school.

The centre was designated in 2007 and serves a community that falls into the 30% most deprived areas nationally. There are pockets of high deprivation within the reach area, part of which contains one of the local authority's priority neighbourhoods. The area is served by a number of local amenities, such as community centres and a library. The large majority of early years provision is provided by the private and voluntary sectors.

Hanham Children's Centre serves 1154 children aged under five years. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on benefits is below the national average at 15.6%. There are approximately 145 lone parents within the reach area. The children's centre serves a community of which the vast majority (88%) is White British, with the remainder being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

The centre provides a range of services, including health and family support services, play and learning experiences for children and adults. The centre provides advice

and guidance to parents on the day-care and childminding facilities available within the local community. The large majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities in line with those expected for their age on entry to early years provision.

The centre is governed directly by the local authority and also has a partnership advisory board. The advisory board is made up of a cross-section of professionals, including representatives from the voluntary sector. It does not currently include any parents. The advisory board is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre and its strategic development. The centre has a parents' forum.

The centre works in partnership with other agencies to deliver new services or enrich existing ones. The local health visitors share the office with centre staff.

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

Hanham is a satisfactory children's centre. The dedicated and committed staff, shared between all the centres in the cluster, enable managers to maintain the level of service and cope with staff absence and ensure that families feel welcomed and supported. However, not enough of the most isolated and vulnerable families within the reach area engage with the centre's services.

There have been significant recent organisational changes within the local authority. New accountability and responsibility arrangements are now clear and well understood by centre staff and are starting to take effect; however, it is too early to judge their full impact on the children's centre. Leaders have a clear vision of how to improve the centre's work. However, the absence of one centre leader and the practice manager due to long-term illness, with temporary replacement for the latter only, has not facilitated rapid improvement in the provision, despite improved quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation systems. Managers and staff routinely monitor and evaluate the work of the centre, enabling them to contribute well to the self-evaluation process and to inform the development plan. However, some other services do not systematically provide data to enable managers to accurately track the outcomes of users guided to use their services.

Multi-agency and partnership working, particularly with other services within the local authority, is a major strength of the centre and contributes well to improved outcomes for the most vulnerable families.

Those families identified as requiring support and referred to the centre have their needs appropriately assessed. Once users are engaged, staff often identify other needs and either supply the necessary support themselves or refer the user to the appropriate agency. Staff are also vigilant in identifying needs among families who have not been referred.

Adults improve their parenting skills. However, the centre does not systematically monitor or evaluate their access to other services to which they signpost them in order to improve their economic stability or employability. The centre has supported parents in setting up their own support groups but does not routinely encourage parents to take up voluntary work. It makes little use of volunteers to enhance its provision.

Staff make maximum use of the single dedicated room and other spaces to provide a satisfactory range of activities. These focus on children's social and emotional development. Much of the provision is for universal users but it includes programmes specifically designed for identified vulnerable groups. Weekend activities encourage attendance at the centre by fathers who work. Stay and play sessions are well attended and appreciated. Parents comment favourably on them. One father said that the centre had 'enabled him to fulfil his potential as a parent regardless of gender'.

There is currently no parental representation on the advisory board. Families' views are gathered through questionnaires and consultation boards in the centre. These views are then passed to the advisory board and are considered by the centre staff. Families feel that the centre is responsive to their needs and requests.

Outcomes have shown a steady improvement over the last three years, self-evaluation is accurate and development plans address identified areas for improvement and there has been a recent improvement in the use of management information data. As a result, the centre has demonstrated a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of families in the area engaging with the centre's services, especially those who are isolated and vulnerable.
- Increase the robustness of tracking, monitoring and evaluation of services by obtaining accurate and up-to-date information from all sources.
- Improve the involvement of families and the wider community in the centre by increasing the number of volunteers who work in it.

- Increase the number of parents who access training and employment by:
 - undertaking routine assessments of adults' needs
 - working with local providers of adult education and training to identify ways of meeting those needs.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The health and well-being of families are satisfactory overall. Families' health is promoted satisfactorily through the varied range of health services. The centre's healthy lifestyle strategy includes healthy eating, hygiene and physical activity such as buggy walks and active play. The percentage of mothers still breastfeeding after six to eight weeks is low but increasing year on year and the gap with the national average is closing. Childhood obesity has reduced since 2009/10 and is now at the national average. However, the percentage of pregnant mothers who smoke has increased contrary to national trends and is above local levels.

Parents value the range of postnatal services and information accessible through the effective partnership working with the health visitor and breastfeeding coordinator. The health service has recently started to provide live birth information to the centre enabling staff to offer early support to families in need of support. However, midwives do not currently engage with the centre so antenatal support is not available at the centre to support those most likely not to attend medical appointments.

Parents say that they and their families feel safe in the centre. Staff exercise strict control of access to the centre. Good multi-agency working ensures effective arrangements for safeguarding and child protection. Common Assessment Framework procedures are implemented when appropriate and multi-agency working identifies appropriate and coordinated actions well. The risk assessment of accommodation, equipment and activities is thorough. Accidents are appropriately recorded including treatment and actions taken to prevent repetition. Home safety is also well promoted and parents attend training in paediatric first aid. Most parents who have received targeted support report that they feel better able to support their child's emotional and physical well-being. Families in crisis receive high quality support.

Completion of parenting and other courses gives parents the confidence to cope with child rearing in difficult circumstances. Children make good progress from their starting points and develop skills to help them in the future. The percentage achieving 78 points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has risen rapidly from well below the national average in 2009/10, reaching the national level the following year, and at 76.9% significantly above both national and local levels in 2011/12. The centre does not host adult education courses but signposts users to provision provided by the local college of further education or the local authority elsewhere. However, the centre does not systematically track the subsequent take-up of adult education courses or users' access to Jobcentre services.

Parents contribute to the improvement of the centre through completion of evaluation sheets and feedback. They also respond to sheets canvassing their views on what the centre does well, what it could improve and how they believe available funding should be spent. However, the centre is continuing its efforts to recruit parents to both the parents' forum and the advisory board.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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

How good is the provision?

3

The range of services satisfactorily meets the needs of the local area. The centre uses reach area data and works collaboratively with the health service and local schools to effectively identify and address gaps in the provision. Parents appreciate the support they receive and comment on the resultant positive changes for themselves and their children. The Common Assessment Framework and Early Years Foundation Stage assessments are used effectively to ensure that services and interventions improve outcomes for all.

Parents take part in a range of adult learning activities such as paediatric first aid, breastfeeding peer support counselling and the Peers Early Education Programme (PEEP). The centre satisfactorily targets the more vulnerable groups through the PEEP and stay and play programmes and through outreach work.

The centre satisfactorily supports children's learning. Evaluation surveys show that parents are satisfied with the provision. They enjoy attending and contribute where appropriate. For example, other parents appreciate the lead taken in their group by a deaf mother on simple signing with their young children. In addition to the programmes designed to promote children's learning directly or to show parents how to do so, the centre also supports local childminders through sessions both in the centre itself and in the community space at the local school. Staff are concerned that some of the most isolated families are unaware of what the centre can offer. The engagement of more isolated groups particularly from minority ethnic backgrounds is

a priority in the centre's development plan.

Parents said that their parenting skills had improved and that they could now better support their children's learning. The centre is unsuitable for the provision of adult education and signposts access elsewhere to this and other services for parents such as housing benefits, health services and childcare provision. However, it does not systematically track how many do so.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Governance and accountability arrangements through the local authority are clear and well understood by centre staff, who are all employed directly by the local authority. Professional supervision and day-to-day management are also clear and have been effectively maintained, despite the absence of two key managers, through the employment of a temporary practice manager.

Recent improvement in the use of management information data, the annual conversation with the local authority, good staff involvement in evaluation and feedback from users has enabled the centre to produce a self-critical and accurate evaluation of its provision and an appropriate action and development plan to address the identified areas for improvement. Centre staff are quick to add to their action plan when recognising common issues raised elsewhere in the cluster. Resources are used and managed particularly effectively. The centre's single multi-use room is well used for a variety of activities. The centre also makes good use of other resources such as the adjoining youth service rooms and the community space in a neighbouring school, which it helped to set up and equip. The joint staffing of the five centres in the cluster of centres enables managers to deploy staff both effectively and efficiently making best use of their particular expertise throughout the cluster and providing cover where required with common management and working practices.

Equality and diversity are satisfactorily promoted. Staff use a calendar of cultural and religious festivals, posters, multi-lingual welcome signs and toys and other resources which do not reinforce stereotyping to celebrate diversity. The centre is striving to increase the currently under represented number of families from minority ethnic groups using the centre. There is no discrete provision for disabled children in the

centre, which is provided elsewhere in the cluster. However, the centre did support a former user of the centre to set up a mutual support group for parents with disabled children, which meets in another centre with easier access from the wider area.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Policies are regularly reviewed and dated. All staff are subjected to Criminal Records Bureau checks, which are renewed every three years. Staff receive appropriate levels of safeguarding and child protection training annually. The centre works effectively with other agencies to support vulnerable families and safeguard children.

Partnership working is a particular strength of the centre. Good partnership working with other local authority services is facilitated through common higher level management within the local authority or through shared priorities between departments. Common staffing throughout the cluster ensures close cooperation between centres. Hanham Children's Centre has a close working relationship with local schools and community centres, the youth service with which it shares a building, the local library and the health service, which shares its office. The centre has also collaborated with the Prince's Trust to build a suitable allotment for its users. Effective partnership working with other agencies ensures that the range of services available meets the core purpose of the centre.

Staff are aware of the need to engage more users from vulnerable groups and that the views of those already engaged may not fully reflect the needs of the community. The range of current services has a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users. As a result the service provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2

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	3
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hanham Surestart Children's Centre on 25 and 26 April 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We talked with some of you, your children, centre staff and a wide range of partners and local authority staff linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents and judged that the centre provides a satisfactory range of services that are mostly tailored to your particular needs. The centre is inclusive and welcoming, run by dedicated adults who are keen to serve you well. You told us that the centre is a place where you feel safe, secure, included and supported and where you feel staff listen to what you have to say. You commented on the difference the centre has made both to your confidence and achievements and to your children's progress, development and behaviour. Comments such as: 'It gets me up in the morning. If I've had a bad night I know I'm not alone' and 'It means a lot to me as there is nowhere else to go' are typical of what you told us.

You and your children are developing a satisfactory awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles. The children enjoy physical activity in the centre and buggy walks. You learn about healthy eating and hygiene on the programmes. The centre is helping to reduce obesity among children. You are supported in making your homes safe and some of you attend training in paediatric first aid to help you take the correct action in the event that your children have an accident. You reported that the centre had improved your confidence, self-esteem and social skills, especially those of you who felt isolated or were finding it hard to cope. Others said that they had better relationships with their children, better parenting skills and were making positive relationships.

The centre's good quality displays and resources promote children's learning well. Staff provide a satisfactory range of activities linked to children's interests that support their social and emotional development and their communication skills. Stay and play sessions are popular with you and your children and you comment favourably on the benefits to you both. Programmes such as baby massage and baby

buddy groups are also popular and help you to bond with your children and establish networks with other parents.

Some aspects of the centre's work are stronger than others. For example, the way that the staff work with other centres in its group, agencies such as other local authority departments, health visitors, local schools and the youth service contributes to improving outcomes and support for those of you whose circumstances have made you vulnerable.

Leaders are monitoring and evaluating the work of the centre effectively in order to improve it. Although they also use your contributions and you respond when asked, you currently have no representation on the advisory board and the parents' forum has few participants. These groups could better put your views forward if more of you were to get involved in them. Not enough families from the more isolated or vulnerable groups are accessing the centre so we have asked the centre leaders to increase the numbers of these families engaging with the centre's services.

Although the centre supports families to access other services such as employment advice and adult education, it does not have a reliable or systematic system of tracking when they do so or what the outcomes are. We have asked the centre to introduce such a system and to obtain up-to-date and accurate information from all sources, including partner agencies and other services.

The centre is good at meeting your support needs and measuring the impact of any support given. However, it does not routinely identify other needs, for example those who need to gain skills to improve their economic stability. We have asked the centre to improve the way it identifies your needs more accurately in order to work with other agencies to meet them.

Staff do not routinely encourage you to engage in voluntary work, either in the centre or elsewhere, in order to increase your confidence and give you experience that may prepare you to undertake training or gain employment. We have therefore asked leaders to increase the involvement of volunteers from the community.

Thank you to those of you who met us to tell us your views and for contributing to the inspection. Your comments and experiences were invaluable to the inspectors and helped us to make our judgements.

We wish you and your families every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.