

# Inspection report for Woolavington Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	404525
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 September 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Mann HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Julie Simmonds
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Woolavington County Primary School Higher Road Woolavington Bridgwater TA7 8EA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01278 683267
<b>Email address</b>	JSimmonds@educ.somerset.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	None
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	None

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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Piccadilly Gate  
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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents, the centre cluster manager, the senior leadership team, which includes the local centre officers, and frontline staff. They also met with partners and representatives from the centre's advisory board. They toured the centre's reach area to see some of the venues used for service delivery, and observed the one group that took place during the inspection.

## Information about the centre

Woolavington Children's Centre was designated in 2008 as a phase two centre. It is located next to the local village primary school and the large majority of services are delivered in community venues offsite. Since March 2011, the centre has been part of a cluster arrangement with two other centres, Sydenham and Eastover. In this cluster, Sydenham acts as the 'hub' centre and Woolavington as a 'spoke'. The centre is accountable to the local authority and is governed by a cluster advisory board. The centre manager and advisory board oversee all three centres.

The centre serves a rural area of relevant affluence and none of the eight areas within its reach is measured as being economically disadvantaged. Most families who live in the area (96.4%) are from White British backgrounds. There are a few workless families in receipt of benefits living in the area: 13.9% (in 2010) is lower than national and local averages. Children living in the centre's catchment access a number of early years settings, including nurseries and childminders. In general, children enter early years provision with a range of skills and abilities that are broadly in line with national expectations.

## 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

Woolavington Children’s Centre provides a satisfactory service for families. Leaders have recently introduced some improvements, which are beginning to have a positive impact. The proportion of families using the centre has increased from 30% to over 50% in the last two years, with many of those most in need enjoying sustained engagement with services. A recent ‘non-user’ survey of the area showed that up to 30% of families were unaware of centre services. The centre has several strategies in place to address this, including a new agreement with health services to share information about every child’s birth. Marketing strategies to advertise services, such as the ‘New Home’ and ‘New Baby’ packs, for example, are ready for families new to the area or with new babies.

Provision is generally satisfactory and results in mostly satisfactory outcomes. There are strong examples of well-targeted engagement with those families most in need to improve lives, and provision for care, guidance and support is good. Some services, such as those provided by Barnardos, are analysed well to show their impact. However, evaluation of services, including some partner services, is not clear enough to provide consistent and reliable assessment of impact. Outcomes for how children and families stay safe are good, especially for vulnerable families. Arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of children and families are also good. Staff are knowledgeable and work very well with other agencies to protect children’s welfare.

The centre is an inclusive and welcoming environment that promotes good equality and diversity. The large proportion of families attending comes from target groups. These include those at risk of rural isolation and several traveller families. They are engaged through outreach, family support and rigorously monitored casework. Families who have disabled children or children with special educational needs benefit from a good range of services through effective multi-agency working and groups such as the ‘Autism Support Group’.

Sound governance prioritises improvement and tackles weakness appropriately. The

advisory board makes a strong contribution to the overall management of the centre, and members, including the parent representative, fulfil their duties well. The cluster manager has clear vision and works well to achieve progress towards key targets, such as increasing membership numbers. The senior management team are developing their leadership skills reasonably well to support further improvement. The local authority provides adequate support and has sound understanding of its responsibilities. However, over the past year there is limited evidence of rigorous challenge or stringent performance management of the centre's leadership to drive further development. Therefore, there is satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

There is an appropriate range of partnerships, a number of whose members sit on the advisory board. Some have suitable engagement with families to improve their economic well-being through education, for example. Staff provide information on job vacancies and seek support for individuals who need help. However, there is little partnership with agencies to support adults seeking employment, benefits advice and other aspects aimed at improving their economic well-being.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Increase the number of local families who use centre services by:
  - implementing the strategic agreement with health services to use live birth data to assist with the identification of families living within the centre's reach area
  - implementing current and new marketing strategies to engage with more families who may not be aware of the centre's services.
- Strengthen governance by the local authority to enable sustained improvement by implementing rigorous performance management procedures to challenge and support senior leaders.
- Improve the evaluation of centre and partner services to measure outcomes more rigorously, so the impact of services can be clearly demonstrated.
- Strengthen partnership working with adult education, employment and other services to improve outcomes for families' economic well-being.

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

<b>3</b>
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Health outcomes in the catchment area are generally above national and local averages. Local health services, including health visitors, work well with the centre to sustain and improve outcomes. Data and case study evidence show suitable improvements are appropriately targeted. For example, the proportion of new mothers initiating breastfeeding has dropped to 77% in recent months, which is below the county average (82.1%). The centre is addressing this adequately through breastfeeding support and a 'New Baby' group. Outcomes for families most in need

are evidenced well through case files. These show outreach and family support work well with health services to improve adults' emotional and physical health. Support for victims of domestic abuse, education about home safety and parenting skills have a positive impact in improving the domestic environment and result in good outcomes. Individual measurement of need is thorough, and staff make good use of the common assessment framework criteria to implement tailored provision. Children subject to child protection plans have good outcomes because of rigorous monitoring by centre staff and strong inter-agency working.

Families enjoy their engagement with the centre and the view 'We love going to the group' is typical. Children's enjoyment and achievement are better than those of adults. Children make good progress in their early years provision throughout the reach area, and transition arrangements are appropriate. Additional support and 'transition packs' help disabled children and those with special educational needs settle quickly into school. Groups such as 'stay and play' support children's learning and development through a wide range of well-presented activities delivered by staff. Parents value these sessions to socialise with one another, although the majority are content for their children to play and are not fully involved in developing their understanding about how children are learning.

Those families in receipt of targeted support make noticeable improvements in their self-confidence and parenting skills. A few adults attend further education at local colleges or gain paid employment because of their engagement with the centre. Some partnerships are not working well enough to improve the economic well-being of families, and leaders are working on suitable alternative arrangements.

Some parents are involved in governance, and one is vice-chairperson of the advisory board. Parents contribute to decision making and service review. The majority of parents give their views on centre services through surveys and evaluations and the large majority express their satisfaction. An example of parent action is the start of the parent-led group, 'First Friends'. Adults believe the centre listens to their views. A parent explained that 'All staff are so approachable, right up to the cluster manager.'

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

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

<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>3</b>
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## **How good is the provision?**

<b>3</b>
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Provision for children's learning and development is better than that for adults. Universal groups such as the 'playmates' session and 'mini-adventurers' are supplemented by groups in other cluster centres. Children's activities are exciting and hold their interest, such as when they played with floor puzzles and threw balls into pockets. Opportunities for adults' learning and development include parenting courses, personal development and accredited qualifications, although there is little planning for individual next steps to make the most of all learning opportunities. Great effort is made to locate groups appropriately within the large geographical area, and several local community venues are used regularly.

Sound assessment gives a reasonably clear picture of families' needs. Appropriate partner liaison and centre front-line work results in an adequate range of services. The majority of those living within the centre's catchment are registered with the centre. Most groups have quite good levels of participation, although that is not the case with all sessions, and staff make relevant adjustments to timings and venues to address this. Those in target groups, such as isolated families and traveller families, attend regularly. Outreach services commissioned from Barnardos provide an individual twelve-week plan, complemented by family support for longer term provision. This initial outreach and ongoing family support is successful in improving individual outcomes.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families is good, especially for those most in need of support. The centre gives priority to those families who find themselves in difficult circumstances and gives tailored provision to improve overall outcomes. Staff make themselves readily available to families in times of crisis to give emotional support, as well as practical help with parenting advice and household issues such as debt and benefits. One parent who has benefited from such help said, 'Now I realise that she (the family support worker) saved us: we were desperate.'

*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>2</b>

## How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Governance of the centre is satisfactory. The centre cluster manager and advisory board understand their roles and the needs of the area well. They take effective steps to improve centre services, although evaluations are not yet sufficiently detailed to show how well families are doing as a result of services. The advisory board's chair champions the needs of families in the area, and makes suitable challenge to partnerships that are deemed not to be working well enough. The cluster manager sets ambitious development targets and the centre is progressing well towards many of these. Rigorous performance management of staff by the cluster manager has led to improved overall effectiveness focused on families most in need. As a result, provision is developing well. Self-evaluation is accurate and involves members of the senior leadership team to provide a broad view. The local authority understands its accountability but is aware it has not fully executed all of its duties well in the last 18 months. There are some strategic successes, such as the recent data agreement with health, but the Annual Conversation was not rigorous enough to help the centre move forward. The centre manager has no formal performance management in place to give challenge and support, although informal discussions take place from time to time to keep in touch.

The majority of families living in the centre's catchment area use the centre. The centre continues to strive for a greater proportion of registrations and sustained engagement through recent marketing and strategic partnership with health services. Leaders correctly focus much of centre services on those families referred by health and other agencies, and on those families known to the centre who are most in need. Therefore, the centre provides satisfactory value for money. Sound partnership working has a positive impact on families' lives. Some partners are fully engaged in detailed evaluation of services, such as Barnardos. Others are developing their partnership role through delivering services and communicating with centre leaders.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Recruitment procedures are robust to ensure all adults working with families are safe to do so. Staff are trained in child protection and prioritise safeguarding in their work. Documentation explains symptoms and referral processes with great clarity. The centre is proactive in engaging with social care, health and other agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. Referrals are made without delay and thoroughly monitored to ensure rapid action. Support for victims of domestic abuse promotes a safer environment. The centre's promotion of equality and diversity is also good. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities enjoy integrated services and specialist provision that meet their needs well. The centre gives high priority to inclusive practice in its evaluation and development planning, and this has resulted in the engagement of its target groups, including travellers, isolated families, and fathers.



*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>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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>3</b>

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

None

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Woolavington Children's Centre on 12–13 September 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to those of you who met with inspectors during the recent inspection. It was helpful to hear your opinions of the centre, and the difference it has made to some of you. Overall, the centre provides an adequate service to families living within its reach and has some good aspects.

Centre managers and staff make safety a high priority, and the quality of their work in this area is good. They make sure all adults working at the centre are suitable to

do so, and they take quick and effective action if they have any concerns about a child's safety. The way that children and adults are helped to develop their understanding about staying safe is good. Parents are given help with developing their parenting skills and receive advice about making their homes safe.

The level of care and support offered to families is good, especially for those who find themselves in very difficult circumstances. Many staff, including the leaders and family support workers, take a great deal of care to make sure parents receive practical help and emotional support when they need it.

Leaders and staff make sure everyone is treated fairly at the centre, regardless of their background or level of need. Those at the centre make sure that all groups of the local community are included in services, and the promotion of equality and diversity is also good.

Inspectors found that partnership working with health was adequate to keep families healthy. Children's opportunities to learn and develop are often of better quality than those for adults. Some parents are involved on the centre's advisory board, and a Parents' Voice group for Woolavington is about to begin.

We have asked leaders to improve some aspects of Woolavington Children's Centre. We would like them to increase the number of local families who know about and use the centre to make sure everyone who needs its services can access them. We have also asked the centre to strengthen its partnership working with those agencies that can help families with adult education, employment issues and benefits advice.

We have also asked the centre staff to evaluate its services more thoroughly so they know the difference they are making to families who live in the area. Finally, we have asked the local authority to give leaders more guidance in their role so they can improve services further.

It is clear that many of you enjoy coming to the centre, and that you and your families gain sound benefits from the services on offer.

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