

Seamoor Ivybridge Area Children's Centre

Town Hall, Erme Court, Leonards Road, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0SZ

Inspection date		8–9 October 2013	
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The majority of families are not taking part in the centre's activities because those on offer do not invite participation or attract those who are less willing to take part.
- Partnerships with a range of other services are not developed sufficiently to provide fully for those families who are in most need.
- Leaders in the centre, health visitors and midwives are not working together to plan and deliver services to promote breastfeeding or reduce the number of children who are obese. This means some families are not getting the help and advice they need to make healthy lifestyle choices.
- Managers make insufficient use of all available information to review services or to check whether families most in need are using them. Opportunities are missed to consult families, make plans and set targets to speed up the rate of improvement.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- Highly committed and experienced staff work hard to improve the lives of the families with whom they work. There are a good number of examples of very effective work with individual families who achieve improved outcomes in their lives.
- Strong support and sensitive care are provided at the centre, which are appreciated by the families and make a big difference to their ability to cope, budget and support their children's learning.
- The resources of the centre and its outreach provision are used well and every effort is made to use what is available. The centre takes advantage of different village venues and the family play bus is used well to transport a wide range of toys and equipment.
- The advisory board has a good record of putting its strong management skills into action.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, managers from the local authority and centre staff. They also met health, education and social care partners, parents, early years practitioners, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited South Brent Hub and the family play bus. A visit was undertaken jointly with the centre leader and an observation carried out of Messy Play, in Ivybridge. Inspectors also had discussions with a childminder representative, school teachers, Jobcentre Plus and Adult Learning.

The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a survey of parents' views, a sample of case studies and safeguarding procedures. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Penny Mathers	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Joyce Cox	Additional Inspector
Claire Griffin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre/group

This phase three stand-alone centre started providing services in September 2009. It is open to the public Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 4.00pm and on some Saturdays. It is one of a cluster of four centres in South Hams including Kingsbridge, Dartmouth and Totnes, managed by Action for Children on behalf of the local authority. An advisory board oversees the running of all these centres.

The main centre is located upstairs in the Town Hall and is accessed by lift or stairs. A satellite hub on the South Brent School site provides services two days a week, during school term time, and use is made of community venues in villages to deliver activities. The centre meets its core purpose by offering a range of services including baby massage, story time, Messy Play, Stay and Play, Chatterbox, parenting courses, a dads' group, a twins' and multiples' group, adult learning and family support. Baby clinics, antenatal classes, breastfeeding support and counselling are also part of the services available from the centre.

The centre covers a large rural area of 150 square miles where public transport is limited. There are three main areas of deprivation and a few children live in workless households. Priority groups have been identified as children in need of protection, children with additional needs, lone parents, and dads and young parents. Almost all of the families are of White British heritage. Most children in the area start early years provision with skills above what is typical for their age.

What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Increase registration and engagement, especially of those families most in need, by strengthening partnerships with key agencies and organisations, including health agencies, doctors, Jobcentre Plus, schools and college, training and early years providers. Use the partnerships effectively to promote services, share information and help families to become involved.
- Work closely with health partners to develop ways that will improve breastfeeding rates and lower obesity levels.
- Develop a way to check on the quality of what is provided and a way to involve families, especially those most in need, so that they are central to the development of the centre.
- Improve checks on information and the way it is used to ensure that the centre sets challenging targets and plans successful actions that will ensure an increased rate of improvement.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Ways of encouraging families to take part in what the centre has to offer, especially those who are less likely to join in, are improving but not yet effective. Information about what can be provided is not reaching families in all areas. Opportunities are missed for partners to work with the centre to encourage more families to take part. Often partners will give out information, but do not always encourage attendance
- Families who come to the centre say that they feel welcomed, valued and not judged. As a result of what the centre has to offer, these families are making great improvements in their lives. Staff make and keep contact with families until their needs are effectively met. Many of these families have a long-standing relationship with the centre and often become volunteers and progress into employment.
- Work with families in most need is seen as a priority. The centre is working with an increased number of children subject to child protection plans. Most of the parents receiving one-to-one support are from priority groups, many being lone parents, children in need or young parents. There is good representation at multi-agency risk assessment conferences and social care workers and health workers are confident in making referrals to the centre in the knowledge that families will

receive the support they need.

- Outreach work is being used increasingly well so that more families are reached in outlying villages. The large rural area brings challenges to the provision of activities. Good use is made of community buildings to successfully deliver play sessions and the well-equipped play bus that takes the right toys to the right places, in villages such as Wembury, Yealmpton, Brixton, Kingston, Cornwood and Staddiscombe.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- For those families who attend the centre or receive one-to-one support the quality is good. Centre staff are good role models and provide strong care and support. Parents and carers overcome parenting challenges, improve their confidence and make progress in their lives.
- The quality of partnership working is variable. The centre does some good quality work with the partners, but the results of this work are not clear. Health agencies provide a range of services, including antenatal classes, but there is no clear plan to improve the declining breastfeeding rates or reduce the rising obesity levels. The centre is working to improve links with early years providers and schools so that they can work together to improve children's readiness for school.
- Adult learning is available from the centre, but there is no plan for improving literacy and numeracy. The progress made by adults and children is not recorded or checked and so the centre does not know how successful courses have been. However, families who have been on courses have said that their lives have been improved and that they are keen to continue their learning.
- Support for children in need is good and protects them. There is a good level of support for families suffering from domestic abuse or housing and financial problems. Safeguarding is promoted well through all aspects of the services and the centre promotes good relations between families.
- Good quality parenting courses are successfully helping parents to be effective and learn how to manage their children's behaviour. Parents describe the courses as a lifeline, saying they have learned how to improve their children's sleeping patterns and develop their speaking and listening skills. Many of the parents are keen to volunteer and attend further training courses.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority sets precise performance targets and now provides better quality information, which is leading to improvements. However, targets for the number of families benefiting from all that the centre has to offer are not yet being achieved. Members of the advisory board are challenging the centre more and now have a clearer view of their roles and responsibilities. Parents attend the meetings. The meetings are well run and focus effectively on actions to bring improvements.
- Safeguarding is central to the work of the centre. Staff work closely with other agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children by making sure that they and their families receive the services they need to make positive changes. Appropriate management ensures the centre runs well from day to day.
- Feedback is gathered on the progress of children and families, but as it is not always recorded it is difficult to check how much of a difference is made by the centre's work. Information is collected but not checked. It is not used effectively to make action plans that ensure families who are in most need are improving their lives.
- There are no checks on which focus groups attend parenting classes. This makes it difficult to set targets to increase the numbers attending.
- Resources are used well and staff are increasingly developing creative solutions to tackle the challenges they face in reaching their families. Experienced staff feel well supported and have access to good training.
- Some opportunities are being missed to include families' views about the services provided. Although views are sought in the Air and Share questionnaires, the feedback is not detailed enough

and the parents' forum has not met for some time.

- Self-evaluation is largely accurate and staff are highly committed and keen to learn. Changes in structures, roles and responsibilities in the past slowed the rate of progress, but there is now more understanding of what is needed, and the strengthened advisory board has improved attendance and commitment by partners. The dedication and positive attitude of the staff, together with determination to do what they do better, are strong indicators of their ability to quicken the rate of improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

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Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	428583
Managed by	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,582
Centre leader	Karen Pearce
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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