

# Inspection report for Briary Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	383391
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 February 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joanne Caswell HMI

<b>Children's Centre Network Manager</b>	Samantha Higgins
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Briary Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	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.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre management team, the local authority, health professionals, representatives from the district advisory board, front-line staff, parents and carers and partner agencies.

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

## Information about the centre

The Briary Children's Centre is located within the Greenhill and Eddington wards of Herne Bay, Kent. It is one of two centres within Herne Bay which serve the local community and are managed by the same network manager. The Briary Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in January 2008. The centre is located on the same site as Briary Primary School. An independent pre-school operates from the school site, although this is not linked to the centre. There is a mixture of privately-owned homes, local authority-owned and rented accommodation within the area, with a high proportion of social housing.

Deprivation levels within the community are high with a particularly high percentage of worklessness and teenage pregnancy rates. There is a high degree of health inequality in the area including obesity, heart disease, smoking and alcohol related illnesses. A higher-than-average number of looked after children live in the local community. Children's levels of skills and understanding on entry to school are often lower than those expected for their age. The majority of families living in the area are of White British heritage although there are an increasing number of minority ethnic group families.

The Briary Children’s Centre provides the full core offer services and has health professionals, including midwives and health visitors, operating from the centre. Governance arrangements are provided by the local authority. An advisory board and steering group are in place which includes partner agencies and a range of stakeholders.

## 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Briary Children’s Centre provides good quality services with several outstanding aspects, including the excellent quality of care, guidance and support provided to families. This well-led, vibrant centre is friendly and exceptionally welcoming to all families. A key strength of the centre is the passion, determination and dedication shown by the centre manager and all her staff in helping support families, particularly at times of crisis. Parents and carers really appreciate this. One parent told inspectors, ‘Staff just want to make a difference to people’s lives.’

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. This is particularly evident for the large number of looked after children in the area served by the centre and children on the child protection register. The centre supports a high proportion of vulnerable families and targets services effectively to reach a large majority of these parents, carers and children. For example, the centre currently reaches 87% of teenage parents within the community. Over 70% of families living in areas identified as being the most disadvantaged are currently accessing the centre’s services. As a result, outcomes for the most vulnerable families are improving well.

Staff know the local area extremely well and recognise the areas where targeted support is needed. Highly effective outreach work in these communities has resulted in increasing numbers of families accessing the centre’s services. Health professionals work directly from the centre and are fully integrated into the centre’s services. As a result, all children aged under five years are seen by a health visitor for routine health appointments. Thorough assessment of families’ needs ensures those most in need are referred to targeted services.

Registration and reach data continue to show an upward trend since the centre opened. Improvements are seen in children's overall development. This is particularly evident in their health outcomes and their readiness for school. As a result, children make very good progress in their learning from their initial starting points.

The process of self-evaluation is fully implemented at every level and realistic and challenging targets are set to ensure ongoing improvements. However, the centre has not yet fully embedded systems to track the long-term impact of the centre's services. Although data are consistently analysed thoroughly, this is not always used sufficiently robustly to measure the centre's effectiveness and to inform strategic planning.

The local authority monitors the centre closely and robust systems are in place to oversee the quality of its services. The centre manager and her team demonstrate an exceptionally clear vision and focus for the centre's future development. Concerted action has been taken to successfully target services at those most in need and comprehensive action plans are in place to ensure continuous development. The significant improvement in outcomes for the most disadvantaged families demonstrates the centre provides good value for money and has good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Analyse data more robustly and consistently monitor all of the centre's activities to inform strategic planning and therefore improve outcomes further.
- Improve the use of evaluation to measure the long-term impact of the centre's services.

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

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes for children and families using the centre are good, leading to significant improvements in family welfare. Improving health outcomes are a result of the significant support and intervention from midwifery and health visitor services. All centre staff link closely with health professionals to deliver fully integrated support services. As a result, parents and carers benefit from the specialist advice of health trainers and receive support with smoking cessation, weight loss and developing an improved understanding of healthy eating. Targeted support is offered through the cookery courses enabling parents and carers to understand how to prepare nutritious meals. Strong support and guidance for the Young Active Parents (YAPS) group enable staff to role model positive behaviour and encourage healthy lifestyles and positive parenting.

Children's obesity levels are below average as a result of the consistent promotion of physical, active play. Parents and carers develop a clear understanding of the importance of exercise and healthy lifestyles and benefit from subsidised membership of the local leisure centre, enabling families to enjoy activities together. Breastfeeding rates continue to increase steadily and there is good provision in place to improve this further through appropriately trained breastfeeding peer supporters.

Children and families feel very safe at the centre and this enables them to feel confident in seeking help when they need it. Good attention is given towards ensuring all areas of the premises are consistently safe and secure. Comprehensive assessment during home visits helps parents and carers to identify potential safety issues within the home. This has a positive impact and has reduced the number of injuries suffered by children. Staff respond appropriately and promptly when safety issues are identified. For example, health visitors noted an increase in injuries sustained as a result of falls from trampolines. Relevant safety awareness weeks and focused projects in response to this improved parents' and carers' understanding of how to keep their children safe.

Looked after children are particularly well supported. Some young parents using the centre are also looked after children and the comprehensive safeguarding arrangements ensure exceptional targeted support is in place. Children involved with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) benefit from excellent integration between agencies with close assessment and preventative services. As a result, the most vulnerable families are supported exceptionally well. All children referred to the centre as being on the child protection register are fully assessed and supported through relevant services.

Children are particularly well prepared for school and their future learning. They benefit from good Early Years Foundation Stage provision and develop key skills to help them settle quickly into school. The most recent Early Years Foundation Stage profile data show the gap between the most disadvantaged children and the rest is continuing to close each year and is now below county and national averages. Specific support is given to those children who have not experienced early years provision through the 'Cool for School' programme. This has been developed by the centre and is now a nationally recognised transition to school programme offering specific preparation for parents, carers and children. One parent praised this programme by stating, 'Without the Cool for School programme, my children would not have settled into school so well.'

Good support is provided to enable parents and carers to enjoy activities within the centre and to enhance their own personal development. Parents and carers praise the friendly atmosphere within the centre and the benefits it gives them by socialising with other parents and carers. One parent said, 'Now I've got friends that understand.' The provision for adult learning is good. Parents and carers undertake a range of courses, both universal and targeted. This results in them feeling more confident, having higher self-esteem and improving their relationships with their children. Parents and carers are involved in the volunteer programme and many

young parents have been successful in completing their education, including undertaking university courses, and securing employment.

Many lone parents are supported by the centre and this enables them to develop key skills to improve their employability. All staff demonstrate a shared commitment towards raising the aspirations of parents and carers to help them succeed in gaining future employment. Children in workless households are supported effectively as the centre targets specialist courses, such as family finance courses, and assists parents and carers with housing issues and applying for relevant benefits. The centre works closely with Jobcentre Plus and is part of the local Employment Forum enabling parents and carers to access training events to assist them in gaining 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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**2**

The centre is establishing itself as an integral part of the community. There is a very positive atmosphere and families form strong relationships with one another. This is enhanced through relevant support programmes, such as baby massage and positive parenting courses. One course – ‘What to do..’, was devised in response to parents’ own requests to offer specialist advice on how to manage children’s behaviour in everyday situations. Parents and carers praise the confidence this has given them in managing children’s behaviour in a positive way. There are many ways in which parents and carers take an active role within the centre and their feedback is warmly welcomed.

All centre staff, partner agencies and the local authority have an in-depth understanding of the issues facing families within the community. The needs of families are assessed thoroughly and sensitively and appropriate support services are provided. For example, the centre recognised the numbers of children with

disabilities attending the Children with Additional Needs (CAN) group were reducing as parents and carers had to attend other assessment appointments at this time. Therefore, to ensure these families are still supported, the centre now offers individual support programmes in response to their requests. The reach to the numbers of children from minority ethnic group families is increasing each month and services are adapted to accommodate individual need.

Early years provision within the community is enhanced as local childminders benefit from support and guidance from the early years teacher. The 'Free for 2' programme enables children aged two years to access high quality early years provision while parents and carers undertake training and other centre activities.

The care and support shown to all families are exceptional. Parents and carers clearly view the centre as a place of safety and somewhere they can seek help. This is exemplified when a parent recently arrived at the centre with concerns about her baby, confident she would immediately receive professional, non-judgemental advice.

Throughout the centre, emphasis is placed on providing services of the highest quality which improve family well-being. Many courses are available to support families who are victims of domestic abuse and violence. There is a good range of courses to support mothers with post-natal depression and targeted follow-up assessments ensure each parent is supported emotionally and physically. Crèche services are provided to support adult learning provision and assistance is provided with transport arrangements to ensure each family can attend. Male carers are warmly welcomed into all activities and staff work hard to continue to register more fathers.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Governance arrangements are clear and effective and the advisory board has excellent representation from partner agencies and professional services. As a result, it appropriately challenges the centre and ensures ongoing improvements and development. The Steering Group and Parents' Forum offer clear lines of communication which aid improvement and represent the views of different services and centre users. As a result, some parents and carers contribute effectively towards the decision-making process. Strategic planning is clear and is informed through



action planning and service delivery. Although data are included in this, this is not yet as a result of stringent and robust monitoring.

Strong partnerships between service providers play a successful part in improving outcomes for families. Development planning includes all key partners and services are fully integrated. Resources are consistently deployed effectively and services are continually quality assured to deliver value for money and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The reach figure to the most disadvantaged families demonstrates the effectiveness of assessment and the centre's strong awareness of the demographics of the local community. The centre continually evaluates the needs of families to ensure good provision is available and offers good value for money. However, evaluation of the long-term impact of the centre's services is not yet fully embedded.

The centre offers a fully inclusive environment where all families are welcomed. As a result, services are adapted to meet individual need and all staff show strong commitment towards helping families overcome barriers to success.

The premises are fully accessible and good attention has been given to ensuring safety and security. Information is available in different formats to meet personal need and the centre is increasingly successful in reaching out to a wider range of families within the community. Targeted work led by the early years teacher has been particularly successful in improving children's achievements and future learning potential. The promotion of equality and diversity is therefore good overall.

Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. All staff are fully committed to ensuring children's welfare and keeping families safe. Procedures for checking the suitability of adults in the centre are thorough. Recruitment processes are robust and policies are consistently applied. All staff are trained in child protection, fire safety and first aid to ensure safeguarding family welfare is consistently a high priority. The wider safeguarding agenda is a significant strength of the centre. Excellent partnership working, together with highly trained staff, ensures early intervention is consistently successful.

*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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>statutory duties</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>1</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>2</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>2</b>

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

An inspection of the linked primary school was conducted at the same time as this inspection. The judgements made towards the Early Years Foundation Stage provision have been considered in relation to the centre’s inspection and the impact it has on preparing children for school. A copy of the school’s report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Briary Children’s Centre on 1 and 2 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall. We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk to us about your involvement and experiences at the centre. It was very enjoyable to meet with you and it was very helpful to hear what the centre means to you and your families. You made it very clear to us that you greatly appreciate the staff and services at the centre. Many of you told us about the positive impact the centre has had on your lives. We found the caring aspect of the centre to be particularly strong and the manager and her staff provide exceptional support, especially to those of you who may be experiencing challenges in your lives.

Your children’s centre has many good features and some which are outstanding. Procedures for ensuring children are safe from possible harm and abuse are particularly effective. This is because the staff are very knowledgeable about the correct procedures to follow to protect children’s welfare. Many of you told us how safe and secure you feel at the centre and that you trust the staff and can ask them for help at any time.

The centre makes a good contribution towards improving your families' health. The centre works closely with health professionals, such as midwives and health visitors, and information is shared to ensure families receive the appropriate levels of support when they need it. We noted the wide range of activities available which help you develop a healthy lifestyle, such as the many opportunities to enjoy physical play with your children, the health walks and cookery courses. These activities are having a positive impact on both children's welfare and parents' well-being. We also noted the wide range of support services available to you, such as the post-natal support groups, which have a positive impact on family well-being.

There is a good range of activities within the centre which help children gain the skills and knowledge they need for future learning. The wide range of groups and activities help children to socialise with one another, develop independence and be well prepared for starting school. We noted from data that the work of the early years teacher and the children's centre activities play a very positive part in ensuring children settle quickly into school and make good progress in their learning.

The leadership and management of the centre are good. The manager is a strong leader and all staff are very dedicated and committed to providing good quality services. There are many ways in which services are reviewed to ensure they provide good quality. We know that parents and carers regularly share their views and some of you are involved in the Parents' Forum and Steering Group. We have asked the centre management team to develop further the use of evaluation to show the impact of the centre's services over a longer period of time. We have also asked managers to develop the use of data to help them identify which elements of the centre are working well and which need more support or resources.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for taking part in the inspection and wish you and your families the very best for the future.

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