

# Inspection report for Bristow Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	383392
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 February 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Dunn

<b>Centre leader</b>	Sharon Creak
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Bristow Infant and Nursery School
<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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## 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the headteacher of the local school, representatives of the local authority, members of the centre's advisory board, a representative of the school's governing body, staff, representatives of partner organisations.

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

## Information about the centre

Bristow Children's Centre is a phase two centre. It opened in March 2008, initially operating from within Bristow Infant and Nursery School, and was fully designated in February 2010. It is now housed in purpose-built accommodation directly adjacent to the school and within its grounds. The centre is managed by the school's governing body on behalf of the local authority, and the headteacher oversees the work of the centre and line-manages the centre leader. The centre also has an advisory board and Parents' Forum that contribute to the governance structure. The South Camberley Children's Centre operates under the same governance and is due to be undesignated in March 2012. Most services have already been subsumed by Bristow.

The centre serves an extremely diverse catchment area with significant variations between wards. Although the overall proportions of families in receipt of benefits and of children living in households depending on workless benefits are below average, these figures are misleading. This is because areas of high wealth mask significant pockets of poverty. The locality includes areas that are among the 30% most deprived in the country. The large majority of families in the area are of White British heritage, with the remainder coming from a wide range of ethnic heritages.

The centre is open from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, for 50 weeks per year. In addition, antenatal workshops run on Saturdays twice monthly and there are other occasional weekend activities. The centre offers services either directly, or through links with partner agencies. Services include health and family advice and support services, and children, adult and family learning. Jobcentre Plus provides information including vacancy lists for the centre, but its advisers no longer attend centre sessions. The centre does not have its own childcare, though links are strong with the school's nursery and has up-to-date information for parents regarding other childcare options in the local area.

## 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

Families warmly appreciate the good quality of care, guidance and support Bristow Children's Centre provides and the difference it makes to their lives. Their positive responses to satisfaction surveys strongly reflect this, with typical comments like, 'I think the service here is invaluable to the community and local parents.' Considering the impact the centre demonstrates on improving outcomes, its overall effectiveness is satisfactory.

The small, dedicated team of staff create a warm, welcoming atmosphere. In the words of a parent, 'The atmosphere is amazing and the people who work here are really nice.' Enhanced by the effective use of space, staff ensure the purpose-built building is attractive and user-friendly, combining stimulating environments for children alongside useful information and facilities for parents.

Although anecdotal evidence of individual cases often shows good impact, the centre's use of data to demonstrate wider impact is at an early stage. It is moving in the right direction with individual service evaluations increasingly demonstrating their impact on improving outcomes. Leaders have plans to use the growing amount of data to review the centre's performance. At present, although the centre uses data to plan services, it does not always have information to identify and target its actions to reach more families.

An adequate range of services results in satisfactory outcomes overall, though there are areas of strength. Effective promotion of children's learning and development has a good impact on their achievement, but opportunities for adults' learning are limited. The centre does not track and assess the impact of other providers carefully enough.

The high priority placed by the centre on being healthy results in good outcomes for a large majority of families in the area, as shown by local indicators, including those relating to breastfeeding and standard of dental hygiene.

Centre leaders have a broadly accurate view of the centre's strengths, though without enough evidence of impact their self-evaluation lacks rigour. That said, leaders are realistic about what is still required to improve Bristow's overall effectiveness. They have focused on improving key aspects resulting in satisfactory provision and outcomes. There is a steadily improving trend such as at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage and in a number of outcomes related to healthy living. Staff understand the priorities well and are motivated to build on what they have already achieved. Consequently, the centre has shown that it has a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Implement plans to make better use of data to provide sharper evidence of the impact of the centre's services on improving outcomes for different target groups.
- Increase the rigour of self-evaluation and support the centre's drive to reach more families through pinpointing and prioritising areas requiring improvement.
- Extend opportunities for adult learning and track the impact of the centres' services provided by its partners.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3
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Children learn and develop well. The 'Steps into School' transition project, runs in partnership with Family Learning, and prepares families well for school, though evaluations identified that it does not always successfully reach those identified as most in need. The proportion of children reaching above average development by the end of Early Years Foundation Stage is above the national average and rising. The gap between the lowest achieving children and the rest has remained constant recently, but is narrow than that seen nationally.

There has been some success with adults' learning through family learning opportunities; popular and successful first aid courses; adults' progression to accredited courses and with adults' personal development. Referring to the Parenting Puzzle course, one parent commented, 'I believe that we're growing stronger bonds

as a family and are very content with the tools we are given.’ However, the centre does not always track or record the results of its signposting to other providers, including to assess the impact of return-to-work services. Although Jobcentre Plus advisers no longer visit the centre, case studies show that families using the centre are improving their economic stability and independence, but less than a third of families using the centre are engaged in relevant activities.

A large majority of families say that they feel safe when using the centre. Staff are well trained in child protection and Common Assessment Framework procedures, including for looked after children, and are proactive in making use of these. The centre currently has no children registered that are subject to child protection plans, though previous case study evidence reflects improved outcomes in individual cases. Leaders are rightly currently exploring ways to improve information sharing with key partners to enable it to target those in the community identified as most in need.

Take-up of available safety equipment, including stair gates, is high. The centre promotes safeguarding of children adequately. Although outreach workers explore this during home visits, and the centre distributes material aimed at reducing accidents and signposts fire safety visits, monitoring of take-up of these opportunities is not always good enough. A large majority of families in the area are engaging well with appropriate health services, as shown through childhood immunisation take-up rates. The percentage of children being breastfed at six to eight weeks shows an improving trend and is above the national average. Obesity levels locally are below average.

Most families using the centre confidently express their views, making good use of the wide range of strategies the centre uses to encourage this. Some parents and carers also engage in the governance of the centre, either as representatives on the governing body or through the developing Parents’ Forum.

The centre can demonstrate adequate reach to different target groups, including lone parents and fathers, though not always the impact of its services on individual target groups across different outcome areas.

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>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>2</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**

**3**

## **How good is the provision?**

**3**

The centre provides a range of good-quality information, guidance and advice. Well-trained and briefed reception staff are familiar with what is available and can direct visitors appropriately. Feedback from the centre's breast-pump loan scheme is unanimously positive. Staff have created a haven where families feel confident to turn in times of crisis, feeling well supported when they do.

The centre adequately meets the needs of target groups. Activities reach all target groups in the area, albeit in varying proportions, and attendance is satisfactory. Although not a large group in the locality, the centre is rightly aiming to extend its reach to teenage mothers through a new support group. Consultation with those already engaged led to the age limit being set at 21 to encourage younger mothers to participate. Strategies to increase engagement with fathers, including weekend sessions, have experienced mixed success.

Leaders are responsive to families' views through regular consultations about services. As a result, different activities have been provided or the times of sessions altered. Parents appreciate what the centre offers, 'whether it's a cup of tea and a friendly ear to a frazzled mother or a chance to meet new people on a short course and learn new ways to keep baby entertained'. However, some parents and carers would like more opportunities aimed towards further qualifications, or to support a future return to work.

Effective promotion of shared family learning, particularly those relating to healthy living, secures adults' satisfactory achievement and personal development. 'Community Chef' sessions organised by the centre were well received, one parent commenting on their evaluation, 'Not only have the children been eating better, trying more foods and definitely eating their five-a-day, I have managed to lose a bit of weight and feel so much healthier.'

Regular evaluation of sessions that promote children's learning and development, including the popular 'Let's Play' sessions, are used to inform planning for future sessions and ensure these are effective. Staff model good behaviours and interaction with children for parents, effectively promoting the value of spending quality time together. As one parent commented, 'I was trying to think why I like coming here so much and realised it's because I get a whole hour just to play with him.'

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**

Leaders have a secure understanding of the local context that informs the rationale behind service delivery. The prudent decision to target specific areas carefully identified within the locality has secured the centre's satisfactory impact. Senior leaders have carried out an analysis of participation. This demonstrates that its services are adequately reaching those identified as most in need of support.

Leaders at different levels understand the clear governance and accountability arrangements. The advisory board, only formed within the last year having evolved from a steering group, is still at the early stages of establishing its role and effectiveness. Similarly, the Parents' Forum explores what families would like the centre to provide, though it misses opportunities to be strategic, for example exploring ways to engage more families in services.

The centre engages well with the steadily increasing proportion of families it reaches, though leaders rightly have plans to extend still further its efforts to engage more families. The centre already provides various activities in different outreach venues and makes good use of available space and resources within the centre itself. The successful 'Community Fun Day' not only raises awareness of the centre in an area of high need approximately a mile away, but also supports improving relationships between police and community. This is an example of one of the many good links the centre has, though the impact of partnership working is satisfactory overall. The centre is proactive in its efforts to improve engagement with all linked agencies further, particularly with regard to appropriate information sharing.

Promotion of inclusive practice ensures that there is no evidence of discrimination. Though the centre has pertinent information about the different groups it serves, use of data is not sophisticated enough for leaders to be able to evaluate rigorously whether gaps are closing quickly enough. The centre has appropriate links with specialist provision locally for families and children with disabilities, though the centre successfully reaches some of these families through its own activities as well.

Sound policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and families that use the centre. The centre meets all statutory requirements with regard to vetting and employment checks. Staff are suitably trained, relevant to role, and are proactive in their duty to protect children and/or parents whose contexts make them



potentially vulnerable, including through the use of Common Assessment Framework procedures to engage other agencies. Links with 'Your Sanctuary' have enabled the centre to provide good support for victims of domestic violence through specific courses.

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>

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

None

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Bristow Children's Centre on 2–3 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

During the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents, and talked with staff, the local authority, representatives of the centre's partners, members of the advisory board and some of you.

You told us that you warmly appreciate the good-quality care, guidance and support the centre gives you. The small, dedicated staff team create a warm, welcoming atmosphere for you and your children. We heard and read many stories from you and centre staff of how the centre has made a difference to your lives.

We were particularly pleased to see how well the centre is helping you to be healthy. Well done to those of you who have trained to be peer mentors for breastfeeding – this really impressed us. With this, and the breast-pump loan scheme, you are all helping breastfeeding rates to go up in the area. It was also good to hear about the exercise and healthy-eating activities that have gone so well.

Your children that attend one of the many sessions the centre provides for them, such as 'Let's Play!', develop well. You told us that you also get good ideas of different things to do with your children at home from these activities. We were pleased to see that those of you who attended the 'Steps into School' transition programme last year had many good things to say about it. If the centre recommends this course for your family this year, we would really encourage you to do your best to attend.

We were also glad that you feel able to express your views on what the centre provides, both positive and to give ideas for improvements. One of the things you told us about was the wish for the centre to provide more sessions aimed at adults' learning, or to support you in returning to work in the future. We, and centre leaders, agree that this is an important area for development. Congratulations to all of you who have successfully undertaken first aid training, though.

Of course, the centre cannot provide everything itself, so sometimes the centre tells you where else you might be able to go to get what you need. If they do this and it is useful, it would be really helpful to let them know. We know that some of you do this already. It is good to see that the Parents' Forum is beginning to take shape. Perhaps at a future meeting you could come up with ideas to help the centre staff as they try to encourage more families to use their services.

Those responsible for running the centre and all of the staff are keen to keep making the centre even better for you. They already have plans to make better use of data and statistics that the centre has that helps them to see what difference they are making for you and your families. We think they should keep working to put their plans into place, particularly to see any particular areas where they can do things to make services even better.

Your views were an important part of our inspection. Thank you to each of you who spared the time to speak to us and share your thoughts and feedback - we really valued your contributions. We hope you will continue to support the centre.

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