

Inspection report for Brompton- Westbrook Children's Centre

Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	404438
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Brompton-Westbrook Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Brompton-Sunshines Nursery

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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the head of the centre, the manager, frontline staff, representatives from the local authority, members of the advisory board, representatives of partner agencies and parents. They also observed the centre's work and looked at a wide range of documentation.

Information about the centre

Brompton-Westbrook Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in September 2008. The centre adjoins Brompton-Westbrook Primary School and is open Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm all year round. In addition, the centre is often open during evenings and weekends. The centre delivers a wide range of services that meet the full core purpose including ante- and post-natal care, healthy eating and living courses and a 'Dad's Toolbox' course specifically for fathers. Outreach services include the delivery of groups such as baby massage at the close-by army community centre and support for children at risk of underachieving delivered in the host and reach schools. The outreach team also provides targeted family support within the area.

The day-to-day management of the centre is the responsibility of the full-time centre manager. The headteacher provides a strategic overview. Governance of the centre is provided initially by an advisory board and overarchingly by the school's governing body. The advisory board has two co-chairs. Both are parents and active users of the centre. The governing body regularly monitors and reports on the work of the centre and the local authority retains oversight.

Brompton-Westbrook Children's Centre is one of 19 centres within the local authority and serves a socially and economically diverse area. Some areas fall within the 10% most deprived in the country, but others the 10% most advantaged. There are 917

children aged nought to four in the reach area, 81% of whom are registered at the centre. The reach area encompasses one additional primary school and nine childcare establishments including the school's own linked nursery. There are seven registered childminders in the reach represented on the advisory board by the childminding co-ordinator. In excess of 300 children aged three and under are supported via the linked childcare settings. Overall, children in the reach area enter early education with skills and knowledge broadly in line with what is usually expected for children of this age. The rate of unemployment is highly variable across the reach area with 235 families known to be in receipt of workless benefits.

The majority of children in the area come from White British heritage backgrounds. Approaching 20% of children are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds including children from Ghurkha families serving at the local barracks.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Highly ambitious leadership and management have inspired this outstanding centre to make a significant impact on the lives of families within the reach area. Centre staff, members of the advisory board and the governing body are fully committed to continuous improvement. Thorough research data, analysed by the local authority, are used well as a tool to review performance and to ensure plans are rightly prioritised at further improving services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families. Staff hold a precise understanding of the diverse local community and the needs and challenges faced. The centre engages successfully and trustingly with those in target groups and the large majority of families and their children in the reach area are registered at the centre.

Participation for most groups is high and families typically sustain contact over time. The centre has successfully raised the engagement of fathers to a remarkable 88% of identified families. Reviews of the participation rates from target groups ensure that these families are increasingly represented. One parent echoed the views of many saying, 'The centre has really changed my life, in so many ways for the better.'

I don't know where I would have been.....I can't imagine.....but not the happy, confident parent I am now.'

Close partnership working with midwives and health professionals ensures early knowledge of families and an understanding of their needs. Tailored and flexible support has a significant impact on improving families' health and well-being. Centre staff reach out to many organisations within the community, securing and improving services for most vulnerable groups. In many cases partnership working is excellent and is a strong contributory factor in the ever-increasing contact with new and well-known families. However, in a small minority of cases fruitful partnerships have been more difficult to secure.

The centre promotes training and family learning. It has devised its own volunteering programme with carefully staged training ensuring participants gain skills for work. This addresses the fewer opportunities for work-related advice and training courses in the locality. Success with recruiting and training volunteers has led to numerous positive outcomes, including expanding the number of courses and activities on offer. For example, breastfeeding peer support is led by a parent volunteer as is 'Stitch and Sew'. Highly popular activities, such as the 'Beach Day' on site or coach trips to the zoo reach remarkable numbers of families as the volunteers provide the necessary support. The number of mothers initiating breastfeeding is well above the Medway average at 60% with the large majority (75%) of these mothers sustaining breastfeeding after six weeks.

Many children within the reach make outstanding progress from their starting points. Between 2010 and 2012 the number of children achieving at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores rose from 73% to 92% which is significantly above local and national averages. Regular 'Play, Learn and Grow' sessions help parents to ensure that their children are well prepared for school. Targeted children receive additional support as they start school and the gap between the lowest attaining and their peers is significantly reduced. Some inconsistency in assessing children's progress, identifying their needs and in sharing information between settings has been identified and is being addressed by centre and school leaders as well as childcare providers.

The centre manager, headteacher, advisory board and the full governing body closely monitor the impact of services and mount suitable challenge to performance. Parents are very well engaged in the work of the centre both through informal parent groups as well as through parent representatives on the advisory board. The centre has outstanding capacity for further improvement as demonstrated by the significant increase in reach and volume across target groups and priority areas over time.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen partnership working with providers of advice and training so that more parents make the transition from volunteering to formal learning, gaining qualifications and employment.
- Further strengthen partnership working with the reach school and all childcare settings so that systems for assessing children's progress and needs are agreed upon and data readily shared in order to clearly evaluate interventions and to prioritise future actions.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre focuses on ensuring measures to keep children safe and well protected are robust. The centre has excellent partnerships with key partners in this regard. Multi-agency working to protect those subject to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and child protection plans is cohesive and effective. Information is rapidly exchanged and acted upon to protect the most vulnerable children. As a result, the number of children subject to a child protection plan has reduced and case studies demonstrate that stability and confidence within families are increased. Highly sensitive outreach delivered in families' homes, for example in the Asian Women's refuge, enables vulnerable parents to take the first steps to engagement.

Families feel very safe at the centre. Access is well controlled and risk assessments for all activities are appropriately carried out. Parents confirm that attending groups and courses such as 'Fire Safety' and 'First Aid and Accident Prevention' at the centre has helped raise their awareness of safety at home. As a result, they have adopted safer practices.

Midwives, health visitors and partners from health hold regular, very well-attended clinics, drop-ins and courses. 'I have attended so many courses now. I started with 'Caring for the Newborn' and 'Baby Massage', went on to baby weaning and then moved on to 'MEND 2-4 (a course designed to promote healthy eating and healthy living with two to four-year-olds) – and I learnt from them all and really enjoyed them too!' one parent reported. Overwhelmingly, parents report feeling well physically and emotionally as a direct result of the courses, activities and emotional support.

Children who attend the children's centre and link nursery and primary school make exceptional progress from their starting points. In 2012, 98% of children reached or exceeded the expected Early Years End of Foundation Stage profile scores, with 92.2% of children achieving this in the reach area overall. In the linked nursery children enjoy starting to read. They learn about the sounds that letters make and progress quickly.

Positive attitudes and positive behaviour abound. Staff and volunteers act as role models in their conduct at all times. Children and families demonstrate great

enjoyment in singing and dancing and many other activities. There is a sense of commitment to the centre by all involved. Parents contribute to the running of the centre through evaluations and sharing their views, resulting in amendments to programmes. On a more formal basis parents are well represented on the advisory board and therefore make a strategic contribution to the centre's development. Employment support from Jobcentre Plus is limited and the detailed volunteering programme is filling this gap in securing a route to gain work-based skills. Parents are increasingly accessing courses beyond the children's centre.

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	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	1
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	2

How good is the provision?

1

Assessment of need is sensitive and highly individualised. Parents are united in the opinion that they receive exactly the support they need. One parent reported, 'They know everyone so well, they get the right support for the right people.' Accurate and current data are collated analysed and provided by the local authority. This information is well used by the centre to assess its performance against key indicators and to review priorities and set targets. Provision is highly successful in securing, retaining and further extending the engagement of most vulnerable families.

Early intervention is fundamental to the centre's success. Links with midwives and health visitors result in opportunities for staff to engage with families at an early point and assess their needs. Regular multi-agency meetings enable partners to design individualised packages of care. Formal monitoring as well as ongoing discussion between staff enable leaders to hold a thorough picture of the impact of their work with target groups in particular. Transitions between increased and reduced levels of support are planned and appear seamless for families.

Provision from the centre to help children and parents learn and develop is extensive and of consistently excellent quality, including at groups run by volunteer parents. In

this way, staff are released to focus on those needing most help. Moreover, families report that the centre invites them individually, if necessary, and will collect and accompany them to activities until they have gained sufficient confidence to come alone. These 'invitations' are carefully and discreetly targeted to meet need. 'I would never have asked for help. They noticed and spoke to me about attending a group....and then they brought me along' one parent recalled. All parents, always, receive the warmest of welcomes.

Activities are planned using a consistent format. The large room within the centre is adapted and re-arranged to provide an appropriate environment and thought is always given to managing risk so that activities are safe as well as exciting! Other venues, including the Lampard Centre on the neighbouring army base, are used to extend provision across the reach area and in this way a greater number of families access learning and support.

Opportunities for educational and personal development are strong. Courses are provided so that when one ends there is something suitable for families to move on to. Some, such as 'Care of the Newborn' and 'First Aid', provide valuable practical advice while others, such as 'Trendy Tots' and 'Music, Fun and games', offer physical activities aimed at particular stages of development. The 'Cultural Afternoon' observed during inspection, offered an amazing opportunity for families to share a feast of foods from around the world and to promote and celebrate diversity. Several parents commented that provision of childcare by the centre had allowed them to attend adult learning activities, including the popular 'Keep Fit for Adults'. This range of valuable experiences allows parents to meet others, to raise their self-esteem and to begin to consider more formal learning and possible career paths.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Centre leaders, members of the advisory board, governors and staff have high aspirations for the centre and a clear, widely understood vision to 'improve the life chances of every child by offering them experiences that they can enjoy whilst learning'. The passion, skill and commitment of the centre manager inspire staff and families alike. A sense of possibility and power to improve lives prevails. The staffing structure is clear and understood by all and front-line staff are often enabled to work in an integrated way with clear lines of

support and supervision. Professional development of staff arises from well-established and cohesive performance management arrangements. The advisory board and governors share information and accountability, and challenge each other appropriately. Governors make regular visits to centre activities which they report on. Services and resources are targeted very effectively where they are most needed and will have greatest impact and as a result the centre provides outstanding value for money. Evaluations are part of the regular cycle of work and these contribute to prioritising next steps and securing continuous improvement.

Arrangements for safeguarding children are highly secure. Staff are vigilant at all times and are all aware of how to raise concerns. Documents and policies are user-friendly and up to date. Leaders ensure that everybody working with children has been rigorously checked and those involved in recruitment have received appropriate additional training. All staff undertake regular safeguarding training, particularly in child protection procedures.

Statutory duties regarding equality and diversity are exceeded. Leaders have a detailed understanding of these issues and ensure equal access, taking any appropriate steps required to ensure this is the case. Data reveal that users of the children’s centre accurately reflect the make-up of the local community. Minority ethnic groups are fully represented in the cultural, religious and national celebrations that take place throughout the year. Significantly increasing numbers of disabled children and their families are accessing the centre from within and beyond the reach. Families’ views are routinely gathered through evaluations, surveys and case studies. These views are used to refine and shape provision so that it accurately reflects the needs and desires of the local community.

The local authority recognises the centre’s impressive achievements and is seeking ways to ensure this best practice is more widely shared. The local authority’s data systems are comprehensive and all data are exploited effectively. The children’s centre collects a wealth of information directly and this is additionally used as a tool for tracking, evaluating and improving the centre’s performance as well as for assessing its contribution to local and national performance indicators.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1

The effectiveness of the centre’s policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1

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

Inspection outcomes for Brompton-Westbrook Primary School and St Mary’s Island Primary School have been considered as part of this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Brompton-Westbrook Children’s Centre on 13 and 14 February 2013. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

First, we would like to say a big thank you to all of you who talked to us, or allowed us to watch your groups during the inspection. It is very important for inspectors to hear your views because we really get to understand the centre and how well it works for you. Brompton-Westbrook Children’s Centre has grown to become viewed by many as being at the heart of your community. The very strong leadership of the centre and the enthusiastic and skilled staff provide you and your children with a range of excellent services that they adapt and refine in order to meet your wishes and your needs.

Those of you we spoke to told us how much you appreciate the centre. You told us how much you enjoy the activities provided and how much more you have gained from your involvement, such as new friendships and the many opportunities to become involved in volunteering and giving something back to the centre you so value. Some of you have responded to the chance to be involved in the running of the centre, supporting and even planning and running groups as well as chairing the advisory board and being involved in the centre’s strategic development.

Those of you who use the centre know a great deal about keeping your families safe healthy and well. Many of you take part in activities and courses alongside your children such as participating in a trip to Joss Bay, or taking part in an active group such as ‘Active Tots’ or ‘Music, Fun and Games’. You appreciate the learning

opportunities on offer, for example 'Parent Art and Craft' and 'Take 5'. A group of you talked about how it was possible to become a volunteer and the different skills you could build. For some of you this has already led to further training beyond the centre and for all of you, it has improved your confidence and well-being. We have asked the centre to extend links with those who provide training and advice so that more of you go on to learning beyond the centre or secure employment.

You all appreciate the childcare that is made available when some of the activities and classes are taking place. You are confident that your children are well looked after. Children and parents enjoy learning together, for example at the 'Play, Learn and Grow' sessions which help you prepare your children for school or at cookery classes or the 'Bug Show' which foster a love of active learning. Children who have attended the children's centre are now getting off to an excellent start at school. We have asked that childcare providers and the schools work even more closely to assess children's progress in similar ways and to share information about what works best in order to support planning.

With the centre's encouragement you make an outstanding contribution to the centre and to the local community. Examples of this include providing peer support for breastfeeding, your leading groups, such as the 'Under 1s Group', 'Making Choices' or helping out at 'Care of the Newborn'. The chance so many of you took to share and taste home cooking from different cultures and countries during the 'Cultural Afternoon' demonstrated your commitment to the centre and promoted learning in many different ways. In addition to volunteering you also provide essential feedback to the centre regarding the quality of provision and how the centre could even better meet your needs. As a result, things change. For example, the timing of certain groups has changed and many activities take place throughout the holidays for your school-aged children to participate in. Two parents are Chairs of the Advisory Board and in this way parents are strongly represented in evaluating the success of the centre and in determining next steps.

The care, guidance and support that you and your children receive are excellent. This is because all staff are sensitive and knowledgeable. They are able to work with you, considering your needs and helping you to decide how you would like to change or improve your lives. They know all about the range of services and people who could help further and therefore ensure you can access the right services and support for you.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to talk to us and were willing to share your personal stories of how the centre has helped you. This helped us to build an accurate picture of Brompton-Westbrook Children's Centre. We wish you, your families and the centre all the very best for the future.

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