



Bristol Standard Celebration Stories



A Bristol Standard story

One Saturday afternoon, I was standing in a sports centre waiting for my granddaughter to finish her dance session. A woman came striding purposefully up the corridor on her way to the gym. Her face looked familiar but, out of context, I couldn't place her. As she went by she smiled and said hello to me. I explained that I was sure I knew her and she said it was probably from her Childminding Development work for South Gloucestershire Council. My brain was still trying to process who she was. I said that wasn't where I knew her from and then told her I was an early year's consultant in Bristol.



At which she exclaimed 'Oh you're the Bristol Standard, of course. I usually only see you standing up at the front on validation days telling us how wonderful it is.' Her eyes then started to well up and she said 'It's just so wonderful, it allows people to have vision and to see things through.' She said it always made her emotional when she thought about how far settings have come through using the Bristol Standard. I told her a bit about the latest developments and she said 'you really must capture this, it needs to be celebrated and shouted aloud.'



We really do have to be proud of the Bristol Standard, and this lady set me thinking that maybe my next piece of work would be to collate some case studies. I would like to thank my colleagues Annette Parsons for being the inspiration for this celebration story booklet and Anne Mortimore for putting the booklet together. I would also like to thank all the settings in the Bristol Standard Family that have contributed to the booklet. It is a real celebration of the power of the Bristol Standard in that it helps practitioners to be reflective and to improve on their previous best resulting in improved outcomes for children and families.



So it just goes to show that even on a dark November evening, someone can be moved to tears in the corridors of a sports centre as they think about the far reaching benefits of the Bristol Standard!

Thank you all for your commitment to the Bristol Standard.

Nicky Bale

Foundation Years Bristol Standard Consultant and Chair of the Bristol Standard Development Group.



Archfield House Nursery, Bristol

'Let your steps now be a little more adventurous!'

At Archfield House we've always taken pride in our provision. The Bristol Standard process has enabled us to involve the whole team in this, including the nursery manager and the cook. We have won an award for our outside space as a result of setting ourselves the target of creating free flow access for our children.



I volunteered to become a qualified Forest Leader and take us into a new era. Having come to terms with the practicalities involved in running Forest School I started to experiment a little more. As time has gone by activities have become less of a 'tick box' with a forest theme and more a reflection of children's ongoing interests complimented by the amazing learning opportunities provided by the outdoor environment.

The overall planning cycle of the preschool room currently involves planning a set of resources and/or activity based on a known interest or learning path that children are encouraged to join in with, whilst leaving time for free play.

This has been underpinned by our reflections on the cyclical nature of observation, assessment and planning (Dimension 6).

I have found that beginning with the adult-initiated activity early and allowing it to run its course naturally sparks a much greater variety of free play and child-led themes. Children's 'next steps,' following Forest School sessions practically write themselves!

Our partnership with parents has become excellent as a result of working towards our Bristol Standard targets. We put on Dad's Days and other family events on Saturday mornings throughout the year. These are a great chance for parents and other family members to join in with children. This involves bacon butties, paper aeroplane competitions and a nice story to round off the morning. We held an event at our Forest School site to give families the chance to experience the great things that happen when children get muddy.



We also involved the fantastic Neil Johnson from the 'Music in the Forest' project, providing musical activities and sing-alongs in the forest environment. This was an incredible success giving parents insight into our provision and the Forest School ideology.



Broomhill Infants School and Children's Centre, Bristol

'Improve on your previous best'

I am proud to say I was on the first Bristol Standard working group with Elspeth Davis and have therefore seen the standard grow and grow through the years. It is something I feel passionate about because it has enabled my own setting and thousands of others to be the reflective practitioners we should be in order to improve our practice.

The strength of the Bristol Standard framework is that it looks at every aspect of our work and includes everyone who is involved with our children and young families.

We know the advantages of these connections on lifelong learning for our children and families and the standard enables us to reflect, plan and make a difference. The powerful statement at the end of each dimension, benefits for children, is the driving force for our setting.

Our biggest challenge in a school setting is to enable everyone in the Early Years to be involved with the journey but this challenge can be met in a creative way. Not everyone has to be involved at the same time and practitioners rise to the occasion when they have the opportunity to celebrate their practice which is fundamentally the essence of the Bristol Standard.

We have submitted our Bristol Standard every year since it began and it sits well with our Development Plans for the School and the Children's Centre.

Elspeth Davis always used to say that the way to raise quality is to improve on your previous best and this is exactly what the Bristol Standard enables you to do.



Bruton Primary School, East Somerset

'New relationships and undiscovered talent'

Embarking on the Bristol Standard strengthened our shared ethos within the team, especially during a year with unexpected support staff changes. It has focussed us on the 'why' and 'how' with our energy and thinking returning to pinpointing the benefits to the children. Having the full interest and support of the Senior Leadership Team, with the EYFS/KS1 leader working in the Reception class, has ensured undertaking the Bristol Standard remains a high priority with momentum.

Developing the two EYFS classrooms into one had become a priority with so many obvious benefits to provision for the children.



After some building work, we now enjoy an improved, spacious learning environment. This has been an immediate success for new reception children with the benefit of continuity in staffing throughout the day.

We wanted to involve parents more and launched 'Fantastic Friday'. Families are invited into school to celebrate the children's learning and share experiences

in school. Closer Home-School relationships has resulted in a collaboration between Castle Cary Children's Centre with Bruton Busy Bees who now hold their weekly session in school benefiting pre-school children and their families from the town.

Our outdoor area is a longer term project with several phases towards achieving a finished outcome including a sensory garden and new sand pit. It is really taking shape adding a wow factor for the children.



Fencing, sheds and seating that over time sadly the elements had got the better of, are now

upgraded. Indoors, a small narrow corridor had become very tired looking. Although still in need of new paint, it has been improved with new book cases to aid children's independence; creating a welcoming and cosy reading area to enjoy their books - complete with bunting.

The children love to use this area and proudly keep it tidy. We have all discovered how talented Mr Weaver, our school maintenance colleague is with his creative thinking and carpentry skills.

Bristol Standard has integrated smoothly into our everyday practice. We realised early on that the process and accreditation is exactly what was needed to highlight our achievements and our ongoing team development which up to this point went unnoticed by the rest of the school. Now we have a platform for what we want to achieve next and why.

Cheeky Monkeys, Cheltenham

‘Tailored provision’

We are busy childminders working in Cheltenham on our second cycle of the Bristol Standard. We have received excellent guidance and support throughout our Bristol Standard journey from our mentor. We have found this individual support and constructive feedback invaluable, especially when working through our first cycle.

A new Bristol Standard network in Gloucestershire will be an excellent opportunity to share ideas with others. The opportunity to give and receive support in a group will enhance our continuing journey of self-evaluation and improvement.

The Bristol Standard is our main tool for self-evaluation and we have found it to be a most effective and beneficial way of improving outcomes for the children in our care. The ongoing process has helped us grow in confidence, further our knowledge and skills and continually question the way we work. It has helped us engage parents and demonstrate what we do and why, then show them how this ongoing process improves outcomes for their children through the tasks we set ourselves.



We have benefitted from the structured approach of the Bristol Standard, and this has proved an excellent way of identifying priorities that we can implement in an organised and co-ordinated way.

Children continually benefit from an improving and tailored provision that encompasses all aspects of their care and learning. They have benefitted by being involved in assessing their own learning and from helping to create a rich environment that continually changes and evolves to suit and encourage their interests, as well as promoting motivation and challenge.



In our opinion the Bristol Standard is an excellent opportunity for childminders to improve the quality of their provision and to demonstrate commitment as practitioners through continual reflection, self-evaluation and improving on their previous best.

Christine Summers Childminder, South Gloucestershire

‘Reflections: Willsbridge Mill Group’

The Bristol Standard has helped me focus on specific areas of improvement across all areas of my work. I was particularly keen to concentrate on Dimension 4 to develop outdoor play.

It reminded me of my visit to friends in New Zealand in 2008, visiting their local toddler group which was based solely outside and where the children were bare-footed all year round. I also recalled visiting their five year old daughter's school where strong emphasis from the start was on the outdoors and Physical Education. These reflections drew me into conversations with other childminders – there was nothing quite like this in our locality; there were opportunities for wider learning and experience, but there were restrictions using

a local hall at a toddler group setting.

With these thoughts in mind we set up a childminder's toddler group with an emphasis on outdoor play provision. We started meeting regularly at Willsbridge Mill which benefits from mixed woodland divided by Siston Brook. With help we secured a ‘set-up’ grant from South Gloucestershire Council for £1,000, which allowed us to buy equipment such as splash-suits for children, pond-dipping nets, den-building items, magnifying glasses, tools, pots and pans.

Our experience has been enjoyable and extremely positive for the children. Toddlers have loved walking, climbing trees and steep slopes, taking risks

and challenging themselves by getting dirty, wet, cold and hot but learning, developing and having fun in the process.

Other activities include walking in the stream, water play with pipes & guttering, making musical instruments from sticks to playing Pooh sticks, floating rafts, going on treasure hunts, observing minibeasts, marvelling at frogs, newts and the wonder of butterflies and birdsong. The changes from autumn, through the winter and into spring have been experienced and observed.

There are plenty of opportunities; for example, to widen children's vocabulary, develop understanding of their environment, count and measure. Imaginative play can easily be sparked with a stick becoming a walking-aid, an instrument, a mark-making tool, sword, fishing-rod, and float. Teamwork, co-operation and kindness to one another is encouraged and cultivates naturally.



I am thankful that the group is well-supported. Recently I was asked to speak to childminders in the Keynsham area who are considering starting a similar group. There is growing interest, acknowledged in national and local policy documents, about the importance of outdoor play. The challenge is to sustain resources, build on this success and reflect how this can be achieved. I realise now, how this experience has motivated me, and that it continues to do so. The Bristol Standard has facilitated these benefits to my practice and provision in my setting and for other local childminders.

Cippenham Nursery School, Slough

'Happy to be here'

We have been using the Bristol Standard as our self-evaluation tool since 2007. We were the first Slough setting to put in a submission and since that time it has become central to the work we do.

Working towards our first full submission as a whole staff resulted in our mission statement, which has coloured our viewpoint since that time. After much discussion and debate we narrowed our field of vision sufficiently to distil our vision to: 'Happy to be here'

We have continued to set aside a precious training day each year to self-evaluate our practice together. This is an inclusive day for teachers, practitioners, LSAs, housekeeping, admin. staff and Governors.



It has become a time which is valued by us all, as from it grows a wider understanding of what we are doing and why. Everyone's views are valid and considered. Parent views are sought each Autumn and Summer term and inform what we do. Children are never slow to tell us what they think about life at the Nursery.

We have considered carefully how we approach all that we do and we reassess it each year. We have completely revised and restructured the way we assess and plan for each individual child. We engaged in a cluster project of eight schools, based on the work of Professor Ferre Laevers. We now assess each child's wellbeing and involvement each half term and use our findings as a basis for our pupil progress meetings.

Following observations of children's spontaneous minion role play, we added some custom made minion hats to the Pharrell Williams song 'Happy' and look what happened! Now I keep this photograph on my desktop to make sure that even on a stressful day, I never forget what our core business is.



A wide range of exciting projects have grown from our reflection. These include rebuilding the entire Nursery School, buying a minibus to take children on visits to the forest and a variety of other destinations, restructuring the outdoor area and building a Wildlife Area opened by Michaela Strachan, and a dedicated football area for the children's use.

The Bristol Standard has helped us to think bigger as we strive to improve on our previous best practice. Changes are constant but we continue to be 'Happy to be here.'

Dinton Pre-School, Salisbury

‘Children at the centre’

Outdoor learning is an important part of our ethos. This ensures that every child’s needs are met, making their individual interests and happiness central to all they do.

The Bristol Standard enables us to celebrate achievement, identify next steps and embed positive changes that directly benefit the children. It has enabled us to pull together as a team and work collaboratively, giving reason and purpose to our practice. Challenging what is currently in place supports us in making changes for the better.

Staff meetings always refer to the Bristol Standard priorities; keeping practice focused. The scheme gives us the opportunity to effectively identify our strengths, in turn recognising



the weaknesses and working closely to strengthen these areas through the use of clear action planning. We are all actively involved, and that ownership of these changes is shared by everyone, including the children. For example one of the actions was to develop skills within the staff team, to ensure that role modelling of play alongside the children was part of everyday practice and formed part of the planning. We worked together

as a team in developing practice and made significant changes, working with the children as 'partners in play' every day. This development is integral to our daily practice. Changing our attitudes and approaches to teaching and learning styles has positive benefits for the children. Changes are thought through and therefore easier to sustain providing consistency and in turn opportunity for the children to flourish.

Completed submissions are shared with families. We track our journey and reflect upon strengths; finding direction in our next steps as a team. All of our stakeholders can engage with the scheme, this encourages reflective practice, sustainable changes and positive impact on those at the centre - the children!



The Bristol Standard process has supported us in raising standards from 'Good' to 'Outstanding'.

First Steps Day Nursery, Slough

‘Side by side’

Where to start in relating our fabulous journey of discovery with The Bristol Standard? There is such a myriad of wonderful and interesting experiences that listing them would be an impossible task. So instead I'll tell you what I love about our Bristol Standard journey.

What would I love to tell you?
I'd love to tell you about how we changed our environments and experiences - we understand children's learning brains better now that we know so much more about neuroscience and our professional understanding of how experiences affect learning has helped us to tailor them to suit each unique child.

I'd love to tell you how forest school has changed children's behaviours through reconnecting (or connecting in many cases)

with nature and how our plans are developing to completely refurbish our outdoor gardens into natural play spaces where children and adults alike are supported to explore and think and learn together.

I'd love to tell you that perhaps the most important aspect of our learning journey with the Bristol Standard has been in how our own brains as children's supporters and facilitators of their learning and development journeys have developed. Through matching our professional studies to our practical involvement with children we've increased our knowledge and deepened our understanding so that through reflection, mindfulness and consideration we are better able to work together to share with our children the enthusiasm and love of enquiry that will support them throughout their lives.

When we started our journey what emerged throughout the reflective process was that at the forefront of every decision we made was “How does this action benefit this child (or these children)?” If we couldn’t answer that question positively then we simply didn’t do it. The question became a bit of a mantra for all of our decisions then and is still our ‘default’ position now!

I’d also love to tell you that the framework has encouraged and supported us as our journey with it has evolved. At first we used the framework as a process to consider what we did well and where the evidence was. This set up our pathway to reflection but our emphasis was on writing the report. As we grew with the standard and our skill in being reflective improved, our emphasis changed and today, as we begin writing our third full submission report, we use the process to support our development plan, our day-to-day aims and objectives leading to bigger goals.

The report to validators is a tool used to let others know about us and how we’re progressing but that has been bypassed by the journey itself. The standard and we now move along the same high quality pathway and that quality is what benefits the children that we’ve known in the past, those we know now and those we’ve yet to meet.

Finally I’d love to tell you that this photograph was the very first image the



validators saw when we started the journey in 2007; we may have better photographs but this will always be the one that launched us into our shared journey and as such remains our most treasured.

So to our friend The Bristol Standard we say thank you for the journey so far; you really have been the best of fellow journeymen and we look forward to continuing side by side for the many adventures ahead.

Froglets and St Phillips Marsh Nursery, Bristol

'A joint submission, mutual support'

We provide before and after school care for our Nursery children in the Family Room. The children gave the club its name; FROGLETS.

We are proud to have been awarded the Bristol Standard which highlights our commitment to play and provision for our children. We received excellent mentor support and submitted a joint play provision and birth to five folder for validation. It has been really helpful and a strength for both the settings to meet together to discuss the dimensions.

Initially Froglets was under used; working together we were able to develop all aspects of our practice. Parents commented that children 'are incredibly well looked after' and that 'staff are friendly and welcoming.' We soon doubled our intake.

We share a space, we share children and families and we share some members of staff, and so it made sense that we worked closely together to learn from each other. We were able to identify similarities and differences in provision needs and work together to support each other. For example; ensuring that a shared space was suitable for the needs of 3-4 year olds in wrap around care sessions



and also for babies and toddlers who attend the nursery 'play and stay' in the day. This was achieved by understanding the competing needs and working together to reorganise the room and use new and flexible storage options.

The Bristol Standard process has enabled us to develop a sense of shared ownership; it has given us a voice, a reason and a way to apply for additional resources. We have slowly developed the ICT provision and resources for the children in wrap around care.



We also share the admissions process and staff training sessions and Froglets and the Nursery work closely to consider how to provide exciting opportunities for children's play and development.

The Nursery has recently expanded to incorporate a Children's Centre which gives us all additional partnership possibilities and learning opportunities using the process of deep reflection to achieve this.



Hollickwood After School Club, Barnet

‘Home from home’

This is a small setting run by a play leader, nursery nurses, learning mentors and SEN support staff. We all work full-time in the primary school as Teaching Assistants and mealtime supervisors and then work every evening in the after school club.

We find this is lovely as we get to be involved and experience all aspects of the children’s day. We are able to communicate fully with teaching staff and parents on the child’s well-being and progression.

We feel the children benefit from this by being able to see staff in different environments and situations. The stability and reassurance of constant figures throughout the school day ensures trust and the feeling of being safe at the setting.



We have recently begun an ‘after school club family tree’ each child and staff member have signed their names on a leaf and placed it on the branches of the tree which takes pride of place on one of the walls in the setting. The children decided on the name as they said “we are like one big family at after school club”.

Our club has grown in the number of children and staff. We all take great pleasure and pride in the club and keeping the children happy. The Bristol Standard has helped us to reflect on the value of play. We all feel strongly that the play in our setting is directed by the children. The children have all been actively involved in bringing our submission folder together and working as a team to be a part of the input. As many attend the setting full time they see it as a home away from home.



We use the folder to show parents and new staff how the club is run and the general daily routine of the setting. I find it a lovely way for people to see this. All staff flick through the folder regularly for a nice reminder of how the club has progressed and the strengths we are proud to say we have.

Engaging with the Bristol Standard has given our staff the knowledge of everything that the club offers the children and what an amazing team they are. In the daily operations of the club you don't realise until you stop and step back and view it all on paper exactly what you do. Talking to the children in club meetings affirms and confirms this. Completing and being a part of the Bristol Standard has been inspiring and motivating.



Julia Harkess, Bristol

‘Thank you Bristol Standard’

When I began the Bristol Standard journey in 2003 I had no idea what a great benefit it would be. As a sole practitioner it can be hard to look objectively at practice, but the reflective element of the Bristol Standard enables me to recognise the good practice and that can be a confidence boost. I was graded outstanding at my last inspection. I am sure considering ways to improve on my previous best played a part in this.

I use the Bristol Standard to keep me on my toes and on task; it's a fantastic motivational tool. The targets and changes I identify vary from large projects to small tweaks that can improve my practice and most importantly benefit the children. Some targets have been easy to accomplish, but others, such as improving the outdoor space for the children have taken years.



I am involved in facilitating Bristol Standard training for childminders I meet likeminded practitioners, sharing ideas and support. I have studied for qualifications, including a degree and most recently a Forest School Leader. I wouldn't have had the confidence to do this prior to starting my Bristol Standard journey.



Most importantly the children that I care for have reaped the benefits. They have a practitioner who is committed to providing the best possible care. I am passionate about my setting and practice and seeing how the children directly benefit from all I do is hugely rewarding.

Thank you Bristol Standard.

Kidz Choice, Barnet

‘A strong team’

Kidz Choice afterschool club, breakfast club and holiday scheme offers both full-time and part-time places depending on the needs of parents and children. We were one of the first groups in Barnet to start the Bristol Standard, having already been involved in another quality assurance scheme that did not make us either reflect or look for improvements.



The Bristol Standard gave the whole staff team, parents and children not only an opportunity to reflect and celebrate what we do well but think about how we want to move forward in order to create an even more exciting way that meets the needs of all the children who attend.

One of our aims was to give children the opportunity to play outside in all weathers. We have a large outside area that creates amazing opportunities for the children to run, hide, climb, slide, play in the dark and experience all the elements. Whilst the children love to be outside all year round their parents have never been as keen to allow their children to get wet or be outside in the dark. We created an information sheet for parents informing them of

the importance of accessing the outdoor areas during all weathers and how beneficial this is to their children's play. This gave us an opportunity to explain to parents the benefits of play. It made parents think about the play they used to enjoy outside.

Children now enjoy the fresh air, feeling of space and the sensory benefits of being in nature. They enjoy the freedom to shout and not to have to use their indoor voices. We have torches, raincoats, wellies, most of which have been donated by the parents. Part of the fun has been wrapping up warm and creating the mood. The children really love the wind and especially playing with the parachute in windy weather.

During our holiday schemes, the children particularly like visiting the Princess Diana Memorial Park, which recognises "that risk taking is an important element of play and physical development". The children have opportunities to challenge themselves in a

controlled environment rather than taking risks in the uncontrolled and wider world. The children were rosy, full of self esteem and visibly glowing.

In this coming year we are planning to create a bakery club, mad science club, gymnastics, football and dance club within our club as we realise that some children do not get the opportunity to attend outside clubs such as these.



Little Foxes Playgroup & Out of School Club, Tewkesbury

‘Small teams that pull together’

When I joined the setting as manager I was challenged with bringing the setting up to speed with the then relatively new EYFS and to help make the business successful and profitable. With a background working in small teams that pull together I was keen to test the perception that the SEF was my task and after hearing good things about Bristol Standard from colleagues at other settings we decided to embrace this as our method of self-evaluation and reflection moving forward.



Coming together to reflect on our working practice as a team on a regular basis has improved us on individual levels and as a team and I am sure was in some ways instrumental in helping us retain our “Good” rating with Ofsted when they last visited. Children attending Little Foxes come into a rich environment that is constantly evolving to benefit their learning needs.

Gone are the days when staff would say: “we’ve always done it like this.....” Bristol Standard has given us the tools to really drill down into the detail of so many aspects of our work. In doing so we address problem areas and come up with solutions and draw up a list of all the many things that we want to do.



We prioritise changes and targets in order to make the learning environment at Little Foxes a place where children thrive and are motivated to learn and to become creative and critical thinkers.

Because we do a joint submission for Early Years and Playwork our Out Of School care has become more professional and has thrived and expanded from a very small concern to a busy, fun packed environment that is full to capacity every session and now includes both breakfast and after school care.



Longleaze Pre-School, Wootton Bassett

‘Raising and maintaining standards’

Longleaze Pre-School undertook the Bristol Standard twelve years ago when they were graded Satisfactory by Ofsted. The Manager felt that using the Bristol Standard reflective tool helped everyone appreciate and value the need to work as a team. By tackling the process together everyone involved has been enabled to recognise their own values and value others’ opinions. Working through the 10 Dimensions enabled all practitioners to be actively involved in making changes to their provision. These changes directly benefited the children and became embedded in daily practice. In 2006 Ofsted judged them as Good. They worked on specific priorities and targets over the years that have made a vast impact on practice. In 2008 the setting was judged Outstanding!

Completed submissions form a detailed picture of the setting. They have been shared with partner professionals (including Ofsted). The content is helpful to share with new parents, students on placement and also serves as part of staff induction, providing a comprehensive account of what the setting is really about.

When specific priorities are identified, the team have noted how these have continued to evolve during the three year cycle and well beyond. For example the setting clearly identified that further work to support Communication and Language was essential. Deeper reflection highlighted that for some children further intervention was needed. The profile of children with speech

language and communication needs was raised amongst the staff. This led to staff thinking about the quality of their own interactions; the impact of an enabling environment; the use of supportive intervention programmes like BLAST and, as they delved deeper; direct involvement with the National Literacy Trust – Early Words Together Project.

As well as sign-posting parents, staff voluntarily ran one of the weekly sessions to support the children in their catchment. The setting is building stronger links with the local library and taking part in the ‘Book Start 5 a day’ challenge.

The adults act as role models encouraging the children at the setting to be reflective and confident in making their own judgements, and this further supports them in fully embracing the ‘characteristics of effective learning’ and thus enhancing their lifelong learning.



Noah's Ark Pre-School, Bristol

'An international celebration story'

During our Bristol Standard journey we have developed from a small sessional pre-school to a pre-school running full days and providing services for more families.

Operating from church premises as a pack away preschool, the Bristol Standard has provided the structure to consider ways to move forward and, as a whole team, to think creatively about our space, our priorities and the steps we should take to enhance our

practice and the opportunities for our children. We now set up on a Monday morning and pack away on Friday evenings and have worked to develop our outdoor environment to offer a wide range of learning opportunities.

More recently we have embraced forest school as an opportunity to develop independence, confidence, freedom and to allow unstructured, child initiated learning to take place.

The clear framework of the Bristol Standard has not only moved our practice forward but it has given us good understanding of the journey of growth and development that we have travelled. It is this 'mapping' of our progress that has given us the confidence to use our experience to partner with a new pre-school in a rural Albanian Village.





The opportunity to pursue this partnership has given us the chance to develop partnership working, to share expertise, to offer training, to undertake action research and to help with equipping the new pre-school.

The next step in this partnership is to second one of our team to work in Albania for the coming year to model good practice and to gain an in depth understanding of the needs and fascinations of children and their families in rural Albania.



By embracing the Bristol Standard principles, reflective practice has become embedded at Noah's Ark, enabling us to offer a quality early years experience to children in our community and beyond.



School's Out Henleaze, Bristol

'Involving staff'

Undertaking the Bristol Standard process has really helped the staff to come together as a team. Everyone thinks about ways to improve the day to day experiences our children have within our scheme.

As a result of contributing to the Bristol Standard meetings the staff are more knowledgeable and reflective, and this has a direct, positive impact on the children they work with.



As the manager it has been invaluable for me to get opinions from all the different staff, and to be able to include their ideas. In the past we have tried many different ways to get more input from staff, but this has easily been the most successful way.



The staff have an increased feeling of ownership of the play scheme. The committee were really pleased when we were awarded the Bristol Standard, this took us by surprise!

We use the targets regularly, almost as a tick sheet of the things we are doing for and with the children.

We held all of our meetings in the last academic year, and we are gathering evidence to submit our folder. New staff members have been keen to get involved in the Bristol Standard.



Southway Playcare, Plymouth

‘What a team is all about’

We first started our Bristol Standard in 2009. The first meeting with our mentor was daunting and it took a couple of meetings to make sure we understood what we were doing and sort the layout of our portfolio. We decided to use lots of bright and colourful photos and short sentences to show others what our setting does and what we did to improve our setting. We also got our parents and committee involved.



I believe that doing the Bristol Standard allowed us to show off our individual strengths and learn about our weaknesses and that is what a team is all about. We work together and help one another. We have monthly meetings where we all have a hand book and discuss what we think, how to meet each target and set new priorities. As manager I will go away and put the portfolio together.



As the manager I get a lot of satisfaction when our BS has been to panel and we receive such a rewarding letter from the panel saying how clear the portfolio is. It shows we are doing a good job, providing a safe, secure play environment for children and for parents to leave their children while they go to work.

We were the first Play Setting in Plymouth to achieve the Bristol Standard and that will stay with us always.



St Chad's Pre-School, South Gloucestershire

'Keeping the focus'

St Chad's Pre-School was a reflective environment before starting the Bristol Standard. However, by completing our first full submission and first interim we recognise that this process has helped us to take our reflections deeper and has made them more meaningful.



In the past we would have general discussions between one or two members of the team about an element of our practice. As a result we made changes and sometimes these changes were not successful or even welcomed by the whole team!

Bristol Standard has helped us to improve this; now priorities are discussed and thought about as a whole team effort at our weekly meetings. Changes that are introduced have been more successful and have the full backing of the whole team. This has resulted in an improved environment for the children and parents that use our pre-school. Staff have the confidence to explain why we work in certain ways and clearly explain the benefits of changes and improvements to parents as they have been involved in the reflective process from beginning to end. It has also helped to encourage all members of staff to take



ownership of the setting and to feel empowered to contribute. Bristol Standard has helped us to become a truly reflective setting and this has benefited children, parents and staff.

As a team we have long felt that the room used for our 2 year olds whilst appropriate for them in many ways, prevented them from engaging in sensory play due to restrictions placed on us by our landlords. We had been struggling to see a way round this. After much team discussion it was agreed that for one day a week the children would swap rooms and so 'Messy Play Friday' was created. In essence this means the youngest children experience play that allows them to engage with all of their senses

and to explore a wider variety of materials than would have been possible in their usual room. This had further impact on the setting prompting the question 'what can we provide for the older children?' In fact what we did was introduce 'Forest Fridays,' resulting in visits to the local wooded area. This has enabled learning in the natural environment, managing risks and engaging in play that would not be possible in the indoor environment.

If one thing has stood out for us during our Bristol Standard journey it has been the way that we have remained focussed and this has provided us with a cohesive plan for the development of our setting.



St Jude's Church Pre-School, Plymouth

'Identifying values'

Our journey into Bristol Standard was slow to start; we experienced staff changes and were unsure of the true value of the Bristol Standard process at first.

We started with regular staff meetings to discuss and reflect on each of the dimensions. Initially we felt overwhelmed by what we had taken on. We came to understand that we were overestimating the work we would need to do and began to realise that the Bristol Standard Process was aimed

at celebrating what we did well, above and beyond the requirements of the EYFS.

Once we focused our efforts, we could truly reflect on and identify the things that made our setting special and the things we truly valued about ourselves and were eager to celebrate.

We chose to complete our submission electronically, this allowed us several benefits, and not least, it allowed us to return to the task of editing each dimension to make sure we truly were representing the setting. It also allowed us to include our strengths and provide evidence directly alongside through images, which we annotated to highlight how we felt this supported our strengths.





As we worked our way through each dimension, we really began to reflect on our practice and the provision we provided. From this we were able to identify what we valued and held to be important in further developing the quality of our Pre-School. We then identified areas that we could address and areas to focus on next. Distinguishing priorities was intuitive as a result of this.



Receiving our Bristol Standard was a great source of pride for all the setting staff, committee and indeed Pre-School families. I consider the true value to have been in the process. Undertaking the Bristol Standard supported us in completing our SEF and was acknowledged by Ofsted in their recent inspection.

We are soon to submit our First Interim submission and are really pleased with the level of progress we have made in the past year in respect of the priorities we identified. The Bristol Standard has helped us to focus our efforts in our constant journey of improvement.



Tara Hawkins Childminder, Bristol

‘What will children gain?’

I am a Bristol childminder and can honestly say I am really enjoying my Bristol Standard Journey. Firstly looking at my strengths and then encouraging identification of weaknesses then setting targets with the aim of improving provision, environment and practice is a really helpful approach. I think it's a brilliant self-assessment tool and I have found it to be more thorough than the SEF.



Because it has children at the centre- it encourages you to think ‘what will the children gain from me setting and completing this target?’ This is exactly how we should be thinking as professional childcare practitioners.



Through the Bristol Standard I was able to increase the amount of mathematical opportunities and learning experiences for the children in my setting. I had

completed the SEF but it was the Bristol Standard that helped me highlight this as a big weakness in my provision. I have completed my targets and now the children have problem-solving opportunities to support their mathematical development.



I understand and see how valuable it is as a self-improvement tool. I would recommend the Bristol Standard to anyone caring for children.



I will continue with my Bristol Standard journey as it not only helps me improve what I can offer the children but it allows the children to help improve the setting by joining in with completing the targets. We had great messy fun making a vegetable garden.



The Richard Pate School Nursery, Cheltenham

'A team effort'

Three years ago as a staff team we decided to embark on a journey of self-reflection and improvement using the Bristol Standard framework.

We set aside time for meetings; concentrating on one dimension for reflection, discussion and evaluation. We gathered evidence and made a plan of action for areas where we felt we could change and improve our practice.



We involved parents and carers by using questionnaires and meetings and the children volunteered their own ideas. We ensured that the children benefited from each change that we put in place and we continually reflected on this during our interim submissions.

The staff are immensely proud of their achievement and this shows in the pride that they take in caring for the children in the setting.



Completing the Bristol Standard has been a team effort and in the ever changing EYFS environment it has enabled us to reflect and celebrate the provision that we offer. It has helped us to give thought to areas of our provision that we may have overlooked previously and it has helped us to make links with other settings and child minders. We use a wider range of resources to help each child reach their potential and we have formed strong links with the families that use our setting.

The staff are more confident in their delivery of the EYFS and they have a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of each child in their care.



Thrupp School Nursery, Stroud

‘New ideas become a regular part of nursery life’

We have used the Bristol Standard Quality Improvement Framework for the last 6 years. We use the scheme as a constant way to self-evaluate and continue to move forward. It ensures that we try new ideas and keep looking for ways to improve the experiences of the children and their families in our setting and improve our own practice.

We are a small team and work closely together to evaluate our strengths and consider new targets. We have been excited to implement these in the form of ensuring closer family partnerships by introducing ‘Dad’s Days’ and EYFS information evenings for parents as well as re-writing our aims and objectives with input from our families. The Dad’s Days have been a real success and we now offer these sessions termly.

We found that we had to offer sessions for other family members as grandparents and aunts wanted to be included!

The EYFS evening helped us to share with families the importance of play and exploration. We set up activities and experiences around the nursery and parents were encouraged to come and play.





The evaluation forms indicated that they had learned how much children could learn through play which was our aim!



We have developed our outdoor learning space and introduced a peer observation process.



As we incorporate new ideas they become a regular part of nursery life. As a team we have enjoyed seeing our setting evolve and change with the opportunities we have implemented because of the Bristol Standard and we will continue the self-evaluation journey finding new ways to improve and develop. We are on our third Full Submission and look forward to the new opportunities it will bring the children, their families and our setting.

Upton Noble CEVC Primary School, East Somerset

‘Time for a professional dialogue’

I now have time to sit down with my Early Years colleagues, not only within my school but within our federation, to have a professional dialogue about changing, adapting and modifying practice and also developing the learning environment. This has proved to be invaluable. The LSA's feel their expertise is being listened to and valued. It's also fantastic for me, as the class teacher, to have another viewpoint to bounce ideas around.

Our big project is the outside area, which is in the very early stages of planning. My LSA has come up with some inspirational ideas and if it wasn't for the chance to sit down and review our outdoor provision, then it's possible that we may have carried on wanting and wishing but never having the time or the know how to get it done.

As a direct result of the reflection process we have changed the way we collect and store observations. This is having a huge impact.

We are spending much more time interacting with the children. We use the submission folder to reflect on things that we have achieved. We also use it to inform us of next steps for the children (and also the adults)! We can look back and celebrate things that went well, and also unpick things that may have not gone so well and try to understand why. It is actually a great folder to look back through and think 'yes, we are doing amazing things in the Early Years and let's celebrate all the hard work we put in'.



We encourage parents to come in at any time, but doing the Bristol Standard made us review when they came in and why.

We invited the mums in for a special Mother's Day party. We visited our local supermarket to find out where our food comes from. We also took a walk next door to the farm. We looked at how the cows are milked, what they are fed on and tried some fresh milk. We then wanted to encourage extended family members into school; we arranged an afternoon tea for the Grandparents – which was a huge success.



One of our long term aims is to develop the outdoor learning environment. We are already taking steps to develop a sensory garden (a tree was donated by a parent and planted by another), and a functioning flower/vegetable patch that is in use all year round. We now have a permanent mud kitchen.



Wellesley Primary School, Yate

‘An amazing difference!’

We have been involved with The Bristol Standard for the last three years. The ten dimensions provided a structured framework from which to discuss present provision, self-evaluate and make new targets. Our practice and the provision for the children significantly improved as a result.

Regular team meetings involving EYFS and KS1 staff, SLT, governors and parents provided a platform where everyone’s knowledge, skills and expertise were shared, valued and respected. A commitment to providing excellent provision and improving learning experiences for children and families was paramount.

Our first focus was the Physical Environment (dimension 4). Although Wellesley Primary School had invested heavily in the grounds providing a fantastic learning space for all the children and was awarded the Platinum Outdoor Play and Learning Award the EYFS outdoor area was rather sterile,

with limited access to trees, shrubs and nature. Our vision was to create a natural environment available at all times that provided opportunities for discovery and learning across all areas of the curriculum. Children would be able to develop their ideas through imagination and role play using natural materials in all weathers.



This was a very exciting time, the budget was agreed, landscape architects were contacted, plans were drawn up and resources and equipment were chosen.

A year later the EYFS outside area was completed. It was extended to include shrubs and bamboo to provide areas for den making, a border for planting and minibeast habitats, a water feature, stepping logs, balance beams, friendship bench, a role play structure complete with bamboo poles for building and a stage for performing arts and wall mounted blackboards to encourage writing during role play. An amazing difference! The EYFS outdoor area was now mirroring the whole school outdoor provision and was accessible at all times rather than 'visiting' the extensive school grounds during timetabled adult led activities.

The children have benefited enormously from this development! It has impacted in many ways across all areas of the

EYFS curriculum. The indoor and outdoor environments are now balanced in their educational provision of resources and thus enhancing the free flow ethos in the EYFS.

Children now have the opportunity to learn outdoors through adult led and child initiated activities in a natural environment and in all weathers promoting a sense of wellbeing, increased self-confidence and risk taking.

As the outdoor areas now offer permanent structures for water play, den making, large construction, writing, climbing, dance, drama and music the children are no longer dependent on adult decisions to set up these areas of learning and have become much more independent and in control of their outdoor play and learning. It has provided extensive opportunities for staff to monitor the children's progress through observations and for planning their next steps.

Westwood Nursery, Bath

‘Outstanding partnerships’

At Westwood Nursery we highly value reflective practice, we have achieved an ‘Outstanding’ from Ofsted, and most importantly we have received high praise from our parents and outside agencies. Reflection has strengthened our parent partnerships and communication between staff, parents and with outside agencies. We have had many supporting statements from our parents.



Staff undertaking the Bristol Standard and embracing reflective practice has a direct impact on the children’s learning and development. We have been most surprised by the way in which the babies have led us and ultimately the way that they have influenced the changes. Staff know the babies so well and always treat them as individuals. As key people, they have a high understanding of their development and interests.

One of the most recent significant changes has been the growth of our ‘Baby Forest School’, the older babies have developed in confidence, gained language, problem solved, gained physical abilities, developed turn taking and social interaction. Because the older babies have grown tremendously we felt our very young babies were missing out. They loved the outdoors but the situation of our existing forest

school was unsuitable for our non-walkers. To ensure all our babies have the enrichment of the outdoors, we are in the process of creating a safe sensory garden with many of the forest school activities but within a safer environment. This will ensure babies as young as 6 months will grow throughout the nursery experiencing and developing within the environment.



We have three Bristol Standard submission folders which are used as reference within the rooms to support best practice.

Our babies and parents are the influences of our changes. We have created story bags, activity bags for our parents to take home and share with their children. They provide our parents with the inspiration and resources they need to extend the fun at home. Our lending library is growing and follows the children's interests.

Our parents are encouraged to complete feedback forms asking for their ideas, comments or concerns. This information is used to make improvements, ideas for resources and cement our relationship with our parents, with the common goal of achieving the best care and stimulating environment for their children now and in the future.



Woodland House Nursery, Bristol

‘Our memories of the beach will linger on, long after our footprints in the sand are gone!’

The success of the nursery rests largely with the staff. The process of reflection enables us to work as a whole team. Dedicated time is set aside on a monthly basis to discuss the Bristol Standard. As part of its preparation for launching the beach school, staff undertook a thorough risk assessment of both the journey and the beach and established links with a cafe between the beach and train station to use as a ‘safe haven’ if necessary. A staff member undertook Level 3 Beach Schools Practical Skills and Environmental Management qualification.

Up to 20 children head for the beach at any one time for a weekly session that takes place all year round. To get there, the children travel by train (under-fives travel free). The children walk to the station and once on the train look for familiar landmarks, including wind turbines and the docks. Mud, stones and shingle, rather than golden sand, are the main features of the beach which provides a great learning environment.



The highlight of each session is the preparation and lighting of a camp fire. The children work as a team to collect the large stones to make the circle and use buckets and spades



with the shingle to make a fire pit. Once lit, the children sing, toast marshmallows and enjoy hot chocolate. They also reflect as a group on what they have been investigating during the session. There are so many benefits to these sessions, in particular the confidence that children gain from the experience. Children thrive on being free whilst the natural materials on the beach fire their imaginations.

The learning opportunities are not confined to the beach. The children have found crabs, jellyfish and squid; back at nursery they discover more about these finds. They often collect driftwood to take back to nursery to make sculptures and

frames for their paintings and photographs. Practitioners link the experiences to storybooks and rhymes, while the children revisit them through their role play. Parents have also expressed a keen interest to participate, so a 'Saturday Play Day,' was arranged and 80 people attended despite the unpredictable weather working as a team to make a huge fire circle and large den to shelter from the rain. It was such a success it will definitely be a regular event on our nursery calendar for our parents. The Beach School is constantly evolving. It won a Nursery World Enabling Environments award and is part of the transformation of Woodland House Day Nursery.



Beth Osborne Deputy Headteacher, Bristol 'My Bristol Standard top ten'

I have used the Bristol Standard in three very different settings, an independent school, a local authority school in difficulties and a children's centre and nursery school. I am passionate about the impact it has had for children and families. It really draws teams together on their reflective journey; I have developed my top ten reasons for doing the Bristol Standard:

10 Evaluation

Evaluating what you are doing and really thinking about why you do certain things helps you to challenge yourself in a non-threatening way. By celebrating what you are already doing well, you have a positive start. From here you can begin to identify improvements. We also begin to realise just what and how much you are already doing well.

9 Value added

In the process of celebrating your strengths you are able to see how much, year on year, you are adding to the quality of provision and practice in the setting. It is so easy to get lost in the daily work and not to see how you are adding to the quality.



8 Reflective

Monthly discussions really help you to engage deeply in reflective thinking. The Bristol Standard provides an excellent model for action research. As practitioners we got caught up in the enthusiasm

of carrying out small research projects. For example, we wanted to find out how the boys were using our garden. This gave us a very useful insight into how we could develop the area to widen their experiences.

7 The Feel Good Factor

By identifying your areas to focus on next, the enormity of what you thought you needed to do becomes much more manageable. By delegating tasks and working through the targets makes you feel as though you are making progress.

6 Inclusive

Everybody can be involved in the Bristol Standard. Not only the whole staff team but children and parents can also have an input. Once you start your discussions you realise the extent to which your setting is inclusive. For example we visited settings in different areas of the city to gain a more holistic view of Bristol as a multicultural city.

5 Motivational Once you get into the swing of the meetings you start to look forward to them. The whole process makes staff feel valued and gives you renewed energy for your work.

4 Clear direction

The Bristol Standard became our Early Years action plan which fed directly into the whole school development plan. As we built on it each year we all knew exactly where we were going with our improvement journey. The plan on the wall and the folder were always available for anyone to see. Updates in our newsletters and a special display informed parents of our Bristol Standard journey.



3 Gets things done

Once targets are written into the Bristol Standard they are reviewed and a clear time frame shared. Tasks were split between the whole team. Keeping Bristol Standard as an agenda item for every meeting during the Interim years ensures targets are met. You will be able to identify new priorities for the coming year.

2 Bonding

The Bristol Standard process really pulls you together as a team with a shared vision. We further developed our multicultural awareness by linking with and visiting a school in Beira, Mozambique. We worked together with teachers in Beira to organise programmes of study for the visits which celebrated the similarities and differences in our cultures.

1 CHILDREN

The only reason for doing The Bristol Standard is to raise the quality of everything you do with children. The key to completing your submission is to articulate the benefits for children. This really makes you think about the impact for the children of everything you do.



Ultimately that is what we are all here for – the children.



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If you would like this information in another language, Braille, audio tape, large print, easy English, BSL video or CD rom or plain text please contact: Nicky Bale on 0117 9031270

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