

Inspection report for Crosfield Nursery School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	383344
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Crosfield Nursery School
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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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361

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents and carers, prospective parents and carers and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents and carers, prospective parents and carers and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made available to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

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

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre staff, representatives from the governing body, the local authority, parents and carers and some of the centre's partners. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Crosfield Nursery School and Children's Centre is a phase two centre delivering the full core offer. It was designated in May 2007 following the completion of an extension to the school buildings to provide a large family room and crèche facilities for centre activity. Around 10 children registered at the school attend a breakfast club run by the centre. A separate after-school club run by a private provider uses centre facilities.

There are 951 children under five years of age, including 358 under the age of two, living within the centre's reach area. The area is culturally and socio-economically diverse and includes pockets of significant disadvantage. Most families live in areas identified as being within the 30% most deprived areas in the country. A wide range of ethnic backgrounds, including Black African, Asian and White British and Eastern European, are represented within the area and include a few refugee families. The majority of families speak English as an additional language, of whom a small minority are at an early stage of speaking English. An above average proportion of children live in households dependent on workless benefits and a high proportion of children live in low income households. The proportion of families living in rented accommodation is above average, some of whom stay in the area for a short time.

Children’s levels on entry to early years provision are below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication, language and literacy skills.

The local authority has delegated responsibility for the governance of the children’s centre to the governing body of Crosfield Nursery School. The governing body is informed by an advisory board with parent and carer, community and local authority representation. The centre is managed by the headteacher of the school and some staff are appointed to work across the centre and school. Following a year when the centre has been working informally as part of a collaboration of five children’s centres locally known as the WOTCH Collaboration, sharing some services, expertise and professional development, the arrangement is to become formalised in September 2012.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Crosfield Nursery School and Children's Centre works in close partnership with the attached school to provide integrated services which are greatly appreciated by families in the area. Its overall effectiveness is good because staff have a good understanding of the needs of the reach area and use this to plan effective, well-targeted support for its families. Because its good quality activities are well used, outcomes for families from all target groups are good. Families thoroughly enjoy attending the centre and participating in the programmes on offer. As one parent said, 'fantastic, an absolute gem'. Good care, guidance and support ensure that families develop high levels of trust in the centre. Consequently, its reputation has become widespread and the centre has established itself as a popular, integral part of the local community.

Provision is of good quality. The centre or its sister collaboration centres are engaging directly with the large majority of children under the age of five in the reach area. As a result of centre’s strong partnership working, services provided directly by the centre are carefully planned alongside activities more effectively provided by other partners, including health services. Parents, carers and children

develop skills and knowledge which support their good and improving health and educational outcomes. For example, through the timely advice given by staff at centre activities, many parents improve their parenting skills and understanding of their children's development and behaviour. Children develop their social and language skills, because of the successful emphasis placed on this aspect of development by staff on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, the centre has identified that, while family support to combat obesity is well regarded, the impact is not sustained well by a few families beyond their participation in a programme.

Leadership and management are good. Positive steps are taken to ensure families, including those who speak English as an additional language and those new to the area, have equality of opportunity to access the range of services available. Governance arrangements support the development of the centre well, and governors have been fully involved in developing systems to ensure ongoing strategic oversight within the formalised collaboration with other centres. Leaders, managers and staff have an accurate understanding of how their work impacts on the lives of families, and current plans for developing the centre accurately reflect the most important areas for improvement. Capacity for sustained improvement is good.

While provision is currently tailored well to meet the known needs of the community, additional local authority data are being developed to provide the centre with more up-to-date and accurate information, particularly in relation to health outcomes. However, staff's skills in analysing this information to accurately identify the needs of families whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, are not yet fully developed.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop staff skills to strengthen their analysis and understanding of the new data made available by the local authority, particularly in relation to health outcomes, to ensure that centre activities closely meet the needs of families in the area requiring the greatest levels of support.
- Improve obesity rates of children by ensuring that health interventions have a sustained impact over time.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre's activities help parents and carers to gain a good understanding of how to promote family health and well-being. Although most services are provided directly by health professionals, there is complementary expertise within the centre, for example, on breastfeeding at times which are convenient and timely for mothers. Most families engage with health services. Centre staff's attendance at health visitor clinics successfully helps to build relationships at an early stage of motherhood, and promotes centre activities, such as the 'Bumps to Ones' programme. Consequently,

breastfeeding rates are above the national average and increasing quickly. Parents and carers give special praise for the support they are given at the centre about weaning their children and how staff encourage the sharing of concerns within group activities. Staff help families well to engage with universal and specialist services, for example, by supporting parents in referrals for specialist provision such as speech and language therapy. The centre places a strong focus on children's physical development, shown in the development of an exciting outdoor garden which gives children a wide range of opportunities for play and exploration. Other services, such as support to stop smoking, are signposted well by the centre.

Families value the safe and welcoming environment established by staff. Children behave and play together very well in the crèche, and activities promote the safety of families well. Work with target groups and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable is effective. Staff support the use of the Common Assessment Framework well so that families who require additional help are identified early and provided with multi-agency support at the earliest possible opportunity. Often this involves extended one-to-one support to ensure continuity while families develop the confidence to manage issues for themselves. Many parents have benefited from parenting and accredited first-aid programmes, developing their confidence as parents and carers, for example in managing their children's behaviour and dealing with tantrums. Parents value that staff have a 'hands-on, non-judgemental approach and get involved in a practical way'.

Many of the play and music sessions run by the centre effectively support children's early communication and social skills, for example the emphasis given to talking things through with children while investigating musical sound or at the Family Learning 'Making Story Sacks' session. At the breakfast club, staff were careful to give children clear reasons why they were being asked to behave in a particular way, which promoted their social skills very well. Together with school staff, the centre runs transition programmes through the summer term to ensure that children are prepared well for nursery education and that the move into primary education is smooth. This is one of many examples of partnership working which is making a valuable contribution to the rapidly increasing outcomes in children's skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Over the last four years, overall outcomes within the reach area have moved from well below national averages to being broadly average. Through the use of children's 'My Family Story' record, parents and carers are helped to monitor their child's achievements against developmental milestones so that any children requiring additional specialist help are identified early.

Families are routinely involved in the development of the centre. Their views are sought and their feedback is used effectively in planning new activities. Adults are given encouragement to improve their levels of skills through activities run in conjunction with Croydon Adult Learning and Training. Recent activities have included upgrading computer and first-aid skills, effectively promoting enjoyment of learning and additional skills to return to work. Families who are vulnerable are supported well in accessing childcare, for example as part of the pilot scheme to

provide funded places for two-year-old children.

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

2

The centre knows its families well and is steadily engaging an increasing number. Leaders have used available data well to target provision to plan activities that are effectively focused and sited in areas of greatest need. Activities are adapted to accommodate local lifestyles, for example, by ensuring that specific sessions fit in with times available for working. 'Saturday Fun' is greatly valued by male family members. Centre staff manage oversubscription for some activities well to ensure that targeted families are able to attend sessions which will be of the greatest benefit to them. Evaluations reflect strong parental satisfaction and appreciation of the good quality provision. When asked how provision could be improved, parents thought long and hard before responding that 'if only the building could be extended then it could be open 24/7 and offer even more activities'.

The centre's events are effectively focused on the learning and development of children and families. Children's progress is recognised well within the centre, with displays celebrating their achievement in activities. Involvement in the annual carnival provides opportunities for adults to use and develop their skills. The expectation that parents should make an active contribution to centre activities helps them to develop their confidence and independence.

The care, guidance and support are reflected in the good relationships and trust with families. Working with families in their home is an established way in which families feel supported, particularly for those needing additional help and at times of crisis. Staff are well-trained and experienced, and case studies demonstrate the positive effect outreach services have on the lives and outcomes for families. For example, staff act as advocates for parents and carers, including supporting applications for housing or to the Home Office for permission to remain in the country. The services

in the centre keep users safe and many activities effectively promote safety beyond the centre, for example, there is a focus on road safety as pedestrian injury is a relatively high form of injury across the local authority.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is led well by the headteacher and community services manager, and effective day-to-day management ensures that the centre runs smoothly. Leaders and managers have effectively ensured continuity of provision during staff changes and set a clear sense of direction throughout the local authority consultation on the future of children's centres. They have played a full part in developing the collaborative model for the future of WOTCH services to make the greatest use of different expertise across the locality. Teamwork across the school and centre is strong, so that staff share expertise and learn from and support one another well. Centre staff actively develop partnerships of benefit to families. Established partnerships include those with schools locally, health services and Jobcentre Plus, helping to ensure that provision is coherent for families. Consequently, available resources are used well and secure good value for money.

Capacity for sustained improvement is good. The centre's work is scrutinised effectively by the school governing body. The arrangements for strategic oversight are being developed carefully to take account of the WOTCH collaboration, and the opportunity is being taken to reconstitute the advisory group to increase family representation further. Leaders see the increased rigour brought to the 'annual conversation' with the local authority as helpful in focusing staff on the most important areas for development. Consequently, leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the centre so that self-evaluation is accurate and used effectively to plan future priorities. Lines of accountability are clear for staff and performance management used well to identify training priorities which balance individual and centre development needs. In its first years, centre staff have developed their own evaluation mechanisms to use alongside the information provided by the local authority. Local authority systems have been improved recently to provide more complete and up-to-date information, but staff have not yet had sufficient access to these data to be sure that the needs of the most vulnerable families have been identified and met. For example, the centre has not been able to quickly identify new families in the area to raise their awareness of

centre provision.

Safeguarding arrangements are efficient. Child protection arrangements are good and records are kept effectively. Staff training is up to date and helps to ensure that procedures are followed consistently, and families are confident that centre staff will deal effectively with any concerns they raise. Staff recruitment and selection procedures are adhered to so that the necessary checks are made on all staff, including volunteers, before commencing employment. Staff know families well and are alert to individual needs and circumstances. This means that they are able to provide support at an early stage and involve other agencies when this is necessary to secure the safety of children or parents. Equality and diversity are promoted well. Centre usage closely mirrors diversity within the area, including by families with disabled members. Families from different cultures and beliefs mix with each other and work together well during sessions. Strong relationships between centre users and with staff are key strengths of the centre's work.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
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	2

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

The inspection of Crosfield Nursery School took place concurrently.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance, *Complaining about inspections*, which is available

from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Crosfield Nursery School and Children's Centre on 6–7 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who gave time to speak to us during the inspection. You were all very positive about what the centre does for you and how the range of activities gives your children good experiences and helps them to develop. During our visit, we looked at and discussed the centre's plans for development and numerous other documents and records with staff. We spoke with staff from a range of partner agencies, together with representatives from the governing body and local authority. We also visited most of the activities taking place during the inspection.

Centre staff work closely with school staff to ensure that you are provided with an integrated service as your children grow and develop. Families thoroughly enjoy attending the centre and participating in the programmes on offer because of the trust you have in staff and the practical support you are given. Some of you told us how you feel listened to and commented on the value of the 'non-judgemental' support you are given, which is of particular help in times of greatest need. Largely as a result of the way in which you share your appreciation of the centre, its reputation has become widespread and the centre has established itself as a popular community facility. Its success to date shows that the centre is well placed to continue to improve as Crosfield makes closer links with other centres within the locality.

Good quality activities and events are matched well to family needs and are planned well in response to your suggestions. As the local authority makes more detailed information available to staff, they will be developing their skills to use this to ensure that future activities match emerging priorities. We have asked staff to research more ways to help some families to promote healthy lifestyles for their children. Currently, staff give you good information about where help can be provided if the centre does not have the expertise to support you directly. When the WOTCH collaboration is formalised in September, staff will be trying to ensure even more effective use of resources by avoiding duplication of activities. You spoke in glowing terms of how the centre events effectively help your children to develop their social and language skills and also support your parenting skills.

Leadership and management are good. Positive steps are taken to ensure families, including those who speak English as an additional language or those new to the area, are welcomed and included in events. The centre is governed well and careful consideration has been taken to secure the centre's future as part of WOTCH. Safety is given a high priority. The centre is safe and the security arrangements are

effective, and many of you spoke of your confidence that you and your children are safe and secure within the centre.

Thank you once again for your time and we hope that in future more parents and carers will benefit from the services that the centre provides.

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