

Inspection report for Purley Nursery School and Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Croydon
Inspection number	362543
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

Centre governance	London Borough of Croydon
Centre leader	Frances Wimpres
Date of previous inspection	This is the centre's first inspection
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Linked school if, applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	(1) Fennies Day Nursery (2) Purley Clinic (3) Childminding network

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

An inspection of the maintained nursery 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 manager, children's centre teachers, senior leaders, a local authority officer, members of the advisory group, staff, nursery managers, and partner agencies, including representatives from the health service, childminders, speech and language therapists, and local playgroups. They had informal discussions with parents and carers and children, and visited 'Stay and Play' and baby boost sessions, and the nursery.

They observed the centre's work, looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its action plans, evaluations of services, case studies, and data about people who attend the centre.

Information about the centre

Purley Nursery School and Children's Centre serves a very diverse social and economic area near to Purley Town, an affluent part of Croydon where the majority of young children live. Some families who attend the centre travel from outside the reach area that include pockets of deprivation. The area is culturally and ethnically diverse with ten different languages being represented. Recently many large houses have been converted to flats through 'buy to let' schemes. These new flats without access to outside play space are occupied by families with children. Some 16% of children under five in the area are living in workless households. There are 800 targeted children under five years of age within the reach area. Many children taking up their education entitlement in the centre have previously attended one of a number of local pre-schools or private day nurseries. Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is typically average. Around, 20% of children taking up education

places have additional learning needs, mainly with speech, language and communication needs. More single parents and parents living in social housing are accessing services, as are families with children with severe and complex needs.

The children’s centre was opened in the Nursery in March 2007. It offers integrated education and care places for three- and four-year-olds and a range of provision to support families in the community. The Nursery School acts as the ‘hub’ for managing, supporting and delivering a range of integrated services through a network of providers. The centre operates on one site and is governed by an advisory board. It provides full wrap-around (7.45am–6pm) provision year round for three–eight- year-olds and includes breakfast and after-school clubs and holiday play schemes, ‘Stay and Play’ sessions for under fours, midwife ante- and post-natal clinics, health visitor drop-in clinics, child health workshops, adult learning classes and childminder network drop-ins, and has links with Jobcentre Plus. It also provides information and advice sessions and ongoing family support from a community service team. The centre provides for children with physical disabilities and/or for those whose parents have physical disabilities.

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 users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of the centre is good. Parents, carers and users of the centre are very appreciative of the centre and say how very welcoming and safe it is. The outcomes for users are good this is because the centre responds well to local needs. Users enjoy a wide range of activities, from the well-attended ‘Play and Stay’ sessions, drop-in clinics and baby boost sessions to training courses from literacy to childcare. These benefit users’ welfare and economic well-being.

The centre has clear management and staffing structures. A very significant feature is the strong teamwork. It is the centre leader’s passionate drive to provide a well-integrated experience for its users. Those in charge have a clear vision and accurate

understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. The excellent partnerships with key professionals such as health visitors, midwives, special educational needs specialists, local pre-school providers, the Nursery and others ensure early intervention work for those children and families who need it. The centre is seen by the local authority as the 'hub within the cluster group' and it provides ongoing training and professional support to other providers.

Parents, other adult users and children have an excellent understanding of safety and the centre ensures all are very well safeguarded. Recruitment procedures, risk assessments, policies and procedures for child protection are robust. The centre promotes an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Parents and users attend an impressive range of activities, from nutrition budget meal taster workshops to advice on breast feeding, weaning or play. These all help parents to gain in confidence and understand how they can improve their family's life chances and well-being.

Children develop new skills and knowledge and grow in confidence in 'Stay and Play' by sharing stories in role play, experiencing messy play and socialising with babies, toddlers and different adults in baby boost sessions. Opportunities for outdoor play and exercise also exemplify the outstanding encouragement for leading healthy lifestyles.

Although priorities for the centre's development are clear and management has a good idea of its success, quantifiable measures of success would help it have an even better understanding, especially in support of those families more vulnerable due to their circumstances. The advisory board is very supportive and has a clearer view about its role but does not monitor the work of the centre robustly enough to hold it to account. Members recognise that this is needed and are also aware that the Open Forum is just starting to have a more strategic part to play in decision making.

Leaders and managers successfully promote equality and respect for diversity and work hard to include those at risk and those families most vulnerable due to their circumstances. Cultural diversity is celebrated through displays such as those for Diwali and through information about support for those who speak different languages. Staff get to know individual families well and this is so evident in the trusting relationships with its users and the close, highly effective work with other agencies and specialists. The centre runs smoothly and good quality resources and well-trained staff are used effectively. As a result, parents and users are very positive about what the centre offers. This, together with the good outcomes and provision, and has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop systems for recording data on the progress made by users in order to demonstrate even more clearly the impact of the centre's work and use this information to target services needed for the most vulnerable.
- Strengthen the rigour and challenge with which the advisory board holds the centre to account.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for users are good. Parents and carers who attend the centre are very positive about their experiences. Most evaluation forms confirm high levels of confidence and satisfaction. They say they value the advice and information given in accessing benefits and support from other specialists. Two comments typical of many were: 'It has been a lifeline... I was isolated before coming here... I have made friends and am more confident.' While the centre holds limited statistical evidence to show the impact and success of its work, it is clear that children and their families benefit from the wide range of services offered.

Individual case studies and parents' and other users' conversations with inspectors confirm an outstanding awareness of the importance of leading healthy lifestyles, safeguarding and the welfare of their children. Parents and other users show an excellent understanding of accident prevention, for example, the dangers of hot drinks in the home, internet use and safe play. Children in the centre move around safely and are extremely well monitored. The strong partnerships with different services ensure that those at risk of harm are identified early on and are supported effectively.

Well-established relationships and a sensitive approach ensure users are confident to seek professional support. Through family learning and crèche sessions they can discuss any weaning, eating, sleeping and behavioural concerns. The links with the health service provide excellent access and support through the midwife ante- and post-natal clinics. The centre has successfully exceeded its targets for sustaining breast feeding at six to eight weeks and reducing obesity. Mothers say they are well supported through the breast feeding drop-in clinics, by midwives, dieticians and especially the community nursery nurse when seeking advice. These together with the close ties with speech and language therapists and health visitors make a strong contribution to mothers' well-being.

Through the excellent 'Stay and Play' sessions parents and carers learn skills and activities they can try out at home to support their child's learning. For example, children, mothers and childminders happily explored story telling, musical instruments, interactive toys and computers. Users from ethnic minorities have good

access to a range of dual-language books and language support groups. Workshops to make story sacks with their child and develop art and story-telling techniques are well attended. Saturday sessions for dads including puppet shows, Little Ballers (football skills) and cookery sessions are also popular.

Users contribute their views through the Open Forum that meets with the leadership team but they are not involved strategically. They have contributed ideas to develop activities such as baby massage and a hearing-impaired parent group. A Saturday Family Fun Day suggested by dads was so popular that it is likely to become an annual event.

Users take advantage of the opportunities to gain certificates and qualifications in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, and childcare at NVQ level, with success. The centre can point to users accessing further training leading to employment, and signposts users to Jobcentre Plus. Local toddler groups access the outdoor facilities and are very appreciative of the professional advice they receive. Families who have a member with disabilities benefit from specific equipment and resources and from the close portage links with the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a wide range of integrated services and activities, which has resulted in an increasing number of families accessing what is on offer. More lone parents and those families with complex needs attend the centre than before. Outreach is a vital and successful part of the centre's work, and this is exemplified through its involvement in the community. Excellent relationships are established with a range of key partners, including health, social care, child minders network and early years providers. Transition between the centre and Nursery is seamless. As leaders say, 'We aim to provide continuity and coherence', and this is one of its strengths. The ante-natal sessions and close links with the local hospital ensure that parents and carers are alerted early on when their children are very young about

what the centre can offer them. Crèche facilities enable users to attend courses at the centre and elsewhere. The centre seeks the views of its users and provides good guidance and support reinforced right from the start. One parent said, 'The child gets to know the key worker well and so do I and this helps so much.'

Through its integrated services the centre has helped to improve the quality of provision across different children's centres, schools and toddler groups. This is helping to raise standards and the quality of provision across the cluster.

The centre is very aware of needing to target the most 'hard to reach' groups. It has, for example, supported different faith groups and a Tamil group. It is aware that many of its families who access the centre are from middle-income families, some of whom need support in raising their confidence and self-esteem. The centre is considering how to best attract those families most vulnerable due to their circumstances and has pitched a local market stall, visited a local prison and attended community events.

Children are assessed and the introduction of 'learning journals' helps build a picture to share with parents and carers of their child's progress. This is at an early stage and parents and carers are being encouraged to be involved. The centre has recently secured funding to buy cameras that can be taken home to record different skills and experiences at home. While staff have a good knowledge about its families and individual children, this information is not yet produced in a quantifiable way that would demonstrate the impact of the centre. Nonetheless, support in improving parents' and children's life chances is clearly evident. Excellent examples of purposeful learning were observed in the 'Stay and Play' sessions, with parents, carers and staff engaging children in activities from making play dough cakes and patties to playing with toys in the sand, counting games on the computers and sharing songs and rhymes.

The centre successfully ensures that families receive a coordinated approach and where difficulties arise in attending, home visits are made to provide support and engagement with other services. The centre has many examples of improvement promoted through its work, ranging from healthy food cookery classes, baby café, obesity programmes and purposeful play to help with accessing benefits, housing and social care. Through the local clusters, the family learning network, schools, the work of outreach workers and information boards, a useful website, activities and events are well advertised. Good signposting to providers ensures that users can access the information or support they need.

The accommodation, though tight, is very well organised and well maintained. It is used flexibly and imaginatively given its limited space. The large outdoor area is stimulating and offered to other users so that they too can benefit from the large open space.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The passion to provide the best opportunities for children their families and users is led by the centre's leader and senior leaders. Leaders, managers and staff share this view and work seamlessly as a team to provide a highly integrated service. This also demonstrates the strong commitment to inclusion and tackling any discrimination.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and include the vetting of staff and others who have unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. All requirements are met. Child protection procedures are thorough and the centre's records reflect best practice. Ethos and activities shared by all well support equality and the celebration of diversity. Early intervention arrangements are good, exemplifying the excellent partnerships within the cluster, including a wide range of agencies and services.

The advisory board provides effective support and has developed considerably over recent years. Its members reflect a broad range of expertise and skills. Members of the advisory board have attended various training, including safeguarding, finance and equalities. They have a clear understanding of their role but do not yet formally monitor the centre's work rigorously enough. They have had input into the centre's self-evaluation and are now well placed to hold the centre to account. Self-evaluation is accurate and while the local authority does not provide specific targets for the centre, the centre's development plans for improvement are realistic. The advisory board is looking to identify priorities with other centres and bodies in the cluster to make the services provided even more cohesive.

Senior leaders encourage regular feedback from the centre users in a variety of ways. This information and their very good knowledge of the local community help them to have a clear view about the impact of provision and how to adapt provision accordingly. However, as indicated previously, measurable data would help inform their evaluation.

Accommodation, though tight in size, is utilised well and is adapted sensibly to meet the needs of the services offered. Resources are very well used and the centre offers

good value for money

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	3
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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

None

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Summary for centre users

Dear Centre Users

We inspected the Purley Nursery School and Children's Centre on 11–12 November 2010. We judged the centre to be good overall.

Firstly, we would like to thank all of you for helping us during the inspection. We found your views very useful and have used them when writing this report. We agree

with you that the centre does many things well. It promotes healthy lifestyles, safety and well-being outstandingly well. You told us how much you valued the work of the centre and how you were always made to feel welcome, and some of you told us it had been a lifeline in difficult times. The centre's nursery, breakfast and after-school clubs and holiday play schemes are very well attended.

The centre also provides advice and training and shares its good practice with local toddler and playgroups, schools and faith groups within the cluster. This benefits the achievement of all children in the area. The good facilities have plenty of good quality resources and educational toys. The transition between the centre and the nursery is seamless and all of the services offered are very well integrated; this is due to the dedication and hard work of leaders. Most of the evaluations and survey returns from parents and users about the various courses and sessions you have attended are very positive.

The centre makes a real contribution to helping all of you; it is fully inclusive and is always looking for ways to improve what it offers. The breast feeding programmes and the midwifery drop-in clinics are very supportive and successful. You told us that you value being able to talk with the health visitor and nursery nurse about any concerns you may have. A good range of information about what is on offer is displayed. You also get the opportunity to meet up at the centre and use its facilities. You also told us about the good advice and support you get to help your child's learning and to access support from others such as specialists in weaning and housing benefit.

Various sessions have helped you to meet new people and develop new interests. We know that several of you have attended training courses in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, and childcare and have successfully gained qualifications and, some of you, employment. You told us how much you appreciate the childcare and crèche that enables you to do other things knowing that your child is safe.

The leaders at the centre manage it well and have established outstanding partnerships with a wide range of services, especially the health service. Leaders have a wealth of knowledge and a clear understanding about the centre and the community it serves and its needs and of the positive impact that the centre is having on many of its users. However, we have asked them to provide data that will clearly show the progress users make and the impact the centre is having on supporting those families most vulnerable due to their circumstances. We think this will make leaders even more aware. We have also asked the advisory board to be more robust in the way that it challenges the work of the centre. Members of the board are very supportive and are keen to do this. As parents you contribute your views and ideas through the Open Forum and act as volunteers and are starting to be more involved in the strategic decision making of the centre.

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