

# Inspection report for Byron Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	366078
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Marshall

<b>Centre governance</b>	London Borough of Croydon
<b>Centre leader</b>	Clare Wingrave, Headteacher and Jane Jones, Centre Manager
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Byron Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Mulberry Bush Nursery

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's leadership team, members of the advisory board, staff, and representatives from the local authority. They also spoke with partner agencies, including those from the health service, parents, carers and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

The main part of Byron Children's Centre is situated in one building. The centre is currently open five days a week term time plus one Saturday a month. In the holidays, it is open three days a week. The childcare component is situated in two buildings on the same site. A residents' meeting room on a local estate is also used for outreach sessions. The centre is fully accessible for wheelchair users and children in pushchairs. The centre is managed directly by the London Borough of Croydon. The headteacher of Byron Primary School is the Centre Leader, with day-to-day management through a part-time centre manager. An advisory board is in place.

In Coulsdon East, there is a lower level of ethnic and faith diversity than there is in other wards in Croydon. For instance, 87% of the residents are White British. Thirteen per cent are from a minority ethnic background. However, at Byron Primary School, the ethnicity is 60% White British and 40% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This reflects the fact that many of the children attending the school are from out of the ward.

Three areas in the ward fall into the 20% most deprived for the "Barriers to Housing and Other Services" domain, including two in the top 10%. Around 23% of children are either obese or overweight, which is close to the Croydon average. Coulsdon East has a 4% teenage conception rate. There is also a higher proportion of terminations than live births amongst these pregnancies. Population by age is made

up of the following mix: 26% older people, 49% working age people and 25% young people. The level of unemployment is 3.4%. Benefit claimants in the Ward are 9% of the working age population.

## 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**

1
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

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## Main findings

Byron Children’s Centre is outstanding. This is because it provides excellent opportunities for a growing number of users and a rapidly improving range of services for children, their families and other adults. The outreach work that is taking place is developing well, as is the partnership with health services. The centre’s development plans show that a very solid base of services and courses had been laid down in the last three years. The centre manager, who is very experienced, has moved this forward exceptionally well and this has had a significant impact on the way services are integrated and expanded, to the great benefit of the users. There is now a cohesive package of services for children and their families which impact positively on their lives. The very close links with the primary school and the on-site early learning nursery and childcare providers are outstanding. As one practitioner said, ‘Partnerships are seamless.’

Governance at all levels is of high quality. The Advisory Group members are proactive in the management of the centre and they share the vision for improvement, along with all layers of staff. There is a real sense of commitment from all levels of management to continue to improve and extend what is on offer to a wider field. Morale is very high and all staff are aware of the ambitious targets that are driving the improvements they all want to see. Equality and diversity are, as one parent stated, ‘what this centre is all about’, and drive improvement. The systems for managing the performance of staff and for their professional development are used outstandingly well. Self-evaluation at all levels is rigorous and based on very careful analysis. This, plus a lack of complacency, leads to there being an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

Children and users feel extremely safe at the centre and procedures for safeguarding

them are outstanding and permeate through the centre. The way the centre works in partnership with other agencies is excellent. It has been particularly beneficial in helping some parents to return to work and in the provision of health care as midwives and other health professionals work from the centre. The work and support that the centre gives to the most vulnerable families are often exceptional, especially when these families find themselves in times of crisis. This is based on the excellent assessment of individual families' needs. The majority of families are fully engaged with health services, including many who are hard to engage. As a result, a large majority show they are developing a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. The quantity of in-depth data about the user groups means the evaluations are usually rigorous and accurately measure impact. These evaluations mean there are very detailed plans to rollout further courses, for example, in smoking cessation that are ready to begin and are based on the careful appraisal of their current effectiveness.

The effectiveness and impact of the outreach work on a separate estate is developing well, but slowly. This is not due to any shortcomings in the centre staff or their planning. As the centre's data shows, there is a core set of families who attend the outreach base who appreciate the opportunity it offers and are being very well supported and who would not attend the Byron centre. The fact that there are some families not yet being fully supported is solely due to the extremely poor outside area and upkeep of the building being used for these outreach sessions, which is out of the centre's control. The centre already has evidence of two mothers who were anxious for support who have stopped going to the outreach room due the extremely dirty and dishevelled outward look of the building and its surroundings. As a result, opportunities are being missed to engage a few parents and meet their needs in full.

Educationally, the percentage of children who achieve 78 points or more at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been improving year on year. The information available to carry out a highly specific analysis of Early Years Foundation Stage data has been developed well this year. The centre is now developing its own method of capturing the information from the schools to which the children transfer.

Those who use the centre are extremely satisfied with what it has to offer and feel they have a real voice in developing the services to meet their needs. A much appreciated parent forum has been established through the Stay-and-Play sessions. The centre has resolved to try again to build on this positive contribution further by making the parent voice an independent and proactive group.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- To ensure maximum take up and effectiveness, the centre, local council and the local authority should work together to improve the outreach building and facilities

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>1</b>
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Case studies and discussions with users demonstrate that there is a very high level of satisfaction with the centre's provision. Parents and carers who have felt isolated and experienced emotional difficulties or family crisis report that they have increased self-esteem and confidence as well as reduced levels of stress and anxiety. This has helped them to develop a more positive relationship with their children. Users say they enjoy spending time playing with their children, learning about their development and how to manage their behaviour successfully. When children are in the centre, they play happily together, are inquisitive and develop their independence. They learn to share and communicate with each other and develop new skills.

New mothers who choose to breastfeed their babies say that they are now being well supported, which encourages them to persevere through any initial difficulties. Users demonstrate that they have a better understanding of oral hygiene and have changed their routines as a result, for example by giving less sugary drinks and switching from a bottle to a trainer cup.

Users say that they and their children feel totally safe. Users are increasingly familiar with a range of safety precautions both inside the home and beyond. For example, they have an increased understanding of road safety, fire hazards and the need to make hot drinks away from children. Users feel better equipped to take care of their children by learning first aid. Case studies show that extremely good multi-agency working, joint home visits and a clear understanding of the Common Assessment Framework is helping to keep vulnerable children safe, including those on the child protection register and those being looked after.

Users develop trusting relationships with staff and each other so are confident about sharing their views, talking about any concerns, making suggestions and contributing their ideas. Users develop a range of additional skills that will support their future economic well-being, including computer skills and how to manage their finances more effectively. There are a number of volunteers working at the centre at the moment and all users readily support others.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, and their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>1</b>
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## **How good is the provision?**

<b>1</b>
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The centre assesses the needs of the community exceptionally well. Assessments made using the Common Assessment Framework are regularly reviewed and staff have a highly detailed knowledge and understanding of the centre users and their families. Very well run programmes, some targeted at the most vulnerable users, have had excellent outcomes in encouraging them in their educational and personal development and their parenting skills. Those spoken to say they have gained very helpful knowledge in how to cope with their children's behaviour. They feel less isolated and very much part of a community now.

There is an excellent range of services meeting the needs of the wider community and the centre is very reactive to suggestions from users. The staff's use of evaluation is excellent. As a result, the centre has improved the number of contacts with lone parents, fathers and minority ethnic groups substantially in the past year. The very accurate and user-friendly information about the immediate locale has enabled them to meet the needs of more specific groups such as teenage parents very well. Parents and children with disabilities and/or special educational needs, although few in number, are very well supported and fully included in the centre.

The quality of care, guidance and support for families is exceptional. The impact of the family, parenting support is outstanding. The centre is continuing its work in reaching further afield and target more vulnerable and deprived groups. This year, many additional contacts have been made as a result of their many advertisements, leaflet drops and personal connections. Excellent relationships with staff enable parents to have a very high degree of trust in them, turning to them in times of crisis. Home visiting and perseverance have led to more families accessing the centre and gaining significantly from it. Midwives and health visitors are highly effective in the support that they give. However, the centre's work is hampered to a limited extent by the very poor appearance and upkeep of the outreach building on a different estate, which they do not own or manage. The provision within the outreach building is very good, and very highly appreciated by the users.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
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## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>1</b>
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Governance and management of the centre are outstanding and are key to the centre's excellent capacity to improve even further. The work of the centre manager and staff has very effectively joined up the way the centre is run and has had a significant impact on the outcomes for users. The advisory group members are very proactive in the management of the centre. Their levels of skill, experience and passion for the work of the centre mean that they can be challenging and proactive. The group represents the users and partners to a full extent and as such its views are highly regarded and acted upon by the management. Senior leaders have very high expectations of staff that are shared with them and with the centre's many partners. The development plan fully reflects these high expectations and provides a great deal of useful data to enable these targets to be more specific and measurable. This has been recognised as a real strength by the centre which has effectively implemented its own data collection and analysis.

Resources are managed very effectively. Activities are costed carefully and evaluated according to their success so that the centre provides excellent value for money. For example, the Saturdads sessions are an expensive programme to run but they are considered very valuable in improving access for fathers and working parents and helping their parenting skills in the process.

Equality and eliminating discrimination are at the core of the centre's work. The centre responds swiftly to any concerns. Some previously hard to reach groups have been encouraged to come to the centre as a result of strong partnership work with health services and the outreach work on a local housing estate. The modern and bright building is completely accessible for wheelchair users, and children and adults with disabilities are fully included and well supported.

Safeguarding is paramount in the centre. The site is secure and there are very robust procedures, and continually reviewed records are kept of everyone connected to its work. All staff play a highly important monitoring role in this aspect. Staff training is extensive, with all staff trained to at least Level 1, and several staff trained to Level 2 or Level 3 in safeguarding. Early notification of any child protection concerns leads to swift action that is recorded in the centre's confidential files. Staff who work with children and vulnerable adults are extremely watchful and alert to concerns and are very clear about procedures.

Self-evaluation is accurate, although at times over-modest, as the centre's management is far from complacent. Views of users are continually taken into account, gathered from parents' meetings, the Advisory Group and through many feedback surveys. Changes are made as a result of evaluation, for example the time of day of a baby massage session was changed to target more needy families and to

fit in with babies' sleep patterns.

Partnerships with other agencies are outstanding and reflect the hard work centre staff have put in to meet the emotional and physical needs of users. For example, health visitors, midwives, a nutritionist and links with childminders have all contributed greatly to the outcomes for users of the centre.

The community is constantly encouraged to engage with the services offered through leaflets delivered to each household, through the developing outreach and through being signposted and referred by local health organisations. Satisfaction levels are very high. For example, from the many users spoken to informally and formally during the inspection, there was nothing but praise and gratitude for the services offered and the support given. Many users had been given a sense of self-worth and confidence that had been absent before and this is having a very positive impact on their relationships with their children and hopes for the future.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>

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

Not applicable

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Byron Children's Centre on 22 and 23 June 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We were very pleased to be able to talk to some of you about the centre's work. I would like to thank the people who came in especially to meet with us. Here is a short report of what we found:

The Byron Centre is a popular, well-attended centre. We see from the returns you filled in for the centre about its work you are very pleased with the services and the guidance that the centre gives you. You get good advice about caring for your children, benefits, moving on to schools, housing, health and support services and employment. You are particularly pleased that the services, with the school and the nursery, are all under one roof. Groups are full and attendance is high because many of you have continued coming to different sessions since the centre began. Children are happy, confident and enthusiastic when they arrive. They cannot wait to get inside. We were impressed while we were at the centre to see children pulling you along to the door and asking you to 'hurry up'.

The centre has a good reputation at the heart of your community. Your relationships with staff are very positive and some say the centre is like a family. We found that a number of parents bring their children to this centre from other neighbourhoods because they enjoy the range of services that are offered and the friendly atmosphere.

Your and your children feel totally safe and secure when taking part in all the activities provided by the centre. Many of you are learning how to keep your children safe at home. We found that you become healthier because of the support and advice given by the centre. You learn about healthy eating, particularly about choosing snacks and cooking for your children. A parent told us: 'I really like the centre because they give organic fruit to our children.' Babies of new parents get a good start as most mothers take up breastfeeding.

We were particularly pleased to see you and your children enjoying the centre's outdoor spaces. We loved hearing that having the extra space and going on outings encourages you to take up healthy, active lifestyles. You told us that you make good friends, which helps you cope with problems and feel happier.

While we were visiting, we could see that the centre gives a warm welcome to all from the different ethnic, religious and language backgrounds among communities in the

area. Everyone is treated with respect. We found that no matter what your age, needs or background, all adults and children enjoy the stay and play sessions and the sessions, like the Thursday cookery groups, that are put on to meet particular needs.

Children are keen to learn. They explore the equipment, books and natural things that are set out to help them in all areas of their learning. New children quickly join in and children really behave well in the centre. We found that you learn skills that help you look after your children, such as setting up routines for bedtimes, and you become more confident when attending the centre. Most people can find the course they want. A few go on to further training and get good advice when looking for work. The centre staff have worked hard to weigh up the effectiveness of the courses they run and we have asked them to implement the changes they have planned as soon as they can.

The staff work exceptionally well with other organisations to get to know what to provide for the community and how to help you as individuals. The manager and staff work well to make sure that as many young families in the area as possible can take part. They are hampered in one way that is not just down to them. The room on the Tollers estate has been running for about two years now but some of you told us that you do not like going there much because it is such a messy-looking building. We have asked the centre's staff to see if they can help the local council and others to do something about the outside of the building and make it more welcoming and easier to use.

Staff are well qualified for their jobs. The mix of skills among staff ensures that all activities are well run and are good quality. We found that the centre has an excellent potential to go on improving. This is because of the strong history of providing good services and the excellent network of support from other people who work with the centre.

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