

Inspection report for Woodlands Children's Centre

Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	383573
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Gilbert Scott Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Gilbert Scott Early Years Foundation Stage

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.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary 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 headteacher, the centre manager, senior leaders, governing body, a range of providers, teachers and other staff, health practitioners and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's operation plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures. They visited Gilbert Scott Primary School.

Information about the centre

Woodlands Children's Centre is located in the grounds of Gilbert Scott Primary School. The centre is part of a collaboration of Children's Centres which is being established to serve Selsdon, Sanderstead and Coulsdon area of the borough. It is situated on the Monks Hill Estate. The centre has been open for three years and is a phase 2 children's centre funded by the local authority. The centre is led and managed by the governing body of Gilbert Scott Primary School. The governing body is made up of representatives of the local council, parent governors, centre users and centre staff. The headteacher leads the school and the centre, working in partnership with the centre manager who is responsible for the planning and management of the centre. There are close operational links between the school's Early Years Foundation Stage and the centre's early years provision. Childcare is provided through the centre's daycare crèche. The centre works in partnership with a range of social, care and health agencies. It opens from 9.00am to 5.00pm each week day for 48 weeks of the year.

There is high level of unemployment in the area and levels of deprivation range from the bottom 10% to 20% nationally to families who are in more privileged socio-economic circumstances. Many parents using the centre come from households where no one is currently in work and the family is in receipt of benefits. There are a few lone parents and a few teenage mothers. Most families in the area are of White British heritage and a minority are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Children’s levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

This outstanding children’s centre fully realises its aim to support local families to achieve better outcomes and to provide a positive and fun environment where children and their families can learn and develop together. The high quality provision is delivered in an extremely safe environment where caring and trusting relationships are nurtured very effectively. As a result, children achieve exceptionally well in all areas of learning and make excellent progress over time. Target groups and those children and parents identified as in most need of support are making significant progress in overcoming barriers in their lives. All users comment on the warm and welcoming environment which helps to create a calm, harmonious atmosphere that benefits all users.

Adult users grow in confidence as a result of attending the excellent range of activities at the centre. Parents and other users are extremely positive about the benefits. As one said, ‘Fantastic, the centre has helped me get my life back again, I do not know how I would have coped without the excellent support from the centre. It has changed my life.’

Inspirational leadership, extremely strong drive and determination to overcome barriers and innovatively build on success are provided by the centre manager who is extremely well supported by the governing body and headteacher. Funding has been cut but, despite this, the centre has extended the courses available. The centre has a

strong group of volunteers who have benefited greatly from the centre's support and have been inspired by the centre manager. This positive experience has motivated a desire to 'put something back' into the centre. The centre's ability to demonstrate sustainability ensures that decisions are made which are effective in continually improving provision. The centre's excellent capacity to improve is evident in the way leadership and governance continually expand the centre's influence across its reach area, in tackling disadvantage and narrowing the achievement gap. Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous, although systems to collect and analyse data are not as well developed as they could be.

Excellent communication with families and parents directs them to help and advice from those who work in the centre and also from other agencies. Local service providers speak very highly of the centre which has become the central hub of the local community. The centre is doing all it can to reach needy families in the area. It provides the stepping stones for parents to gain further qualifications leading to a university degree, for example. Communication with potentially vulnerable members of the community, such as lone parents and those who do not speak English as their first language, is superb.

The centre has very strong partnership links with local schools, specialist services and local churches. The centre works extremely successfully with its partners to offer dedicated care and support, tailored to the individual needs of these groups. The impact of this is that these families are now engaging more frequently with the centre in higher numbers and there is clear evidence of greater community cohesion.

Parents appreciate greatly the high quality of the childcare and the support and knowledge they have gained. Users are fully involved in evaluating the centre's activities and contribute extremely well to its development. The 'Woodlands' Voice' provides an excellent opportunity for parents to contribute to the activities offered and to future development.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the systems and methods of collecting and collating data so that interpretation of data and summaries can be used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre successfully promotes healthy lifestyles through a wide range of activities, support and guidance. These make a very positive impact on the physical, mental and emotional health of its families including target groups and those identified as in most need of support. Parents talk appreciatively about how they were helped to breastfeed and wean their babies. Data show good improvement in breastfeeding

and the number of users who give up smoking is increasing. Most have an excellent understanding of how to provide a healthy lifestyle and diet for their children. The centre successfully involves carers in activities, such as Zumba dance workshops, healthy cooking and family outings to the seaside. Children develop their physical skills exceptionally well in the excellent outdoor play and soft play facilities.

High levels of security ensure a safe and secure environment for all users. Vulnerable groups receive both practical and emotional support and users feel safe enough to openly share their concerns with staff. Children are safeguarded extremely well. Home visits ensure support is tailor made for vulnerable families. Those who have a child protection plan are very effectively supported and consequently their outcomes are very good. The support for children subject to Common Assessment Framework processes is excellent. Help for lone parents is very effective and these groups say that they have been well supported with excellent advice on domestic issues, income support and in coping with their lives. One grateful parent commented, 'The centre manager and all the staff give us the confidence to tackle difficulties.' Parenting courses are very popular and extremely well attended and support parents' understanding well.

The development of all areas of learning, including children's personal and social skills, is excellent. This equips them exceptionally well for the future. Parents report great improvement in their children's behaviour as a result of the help and support they receive from staff. Users thoroughly enjoy the many activities provided by the centre. Consequently, outcomes for children and adults within the centre's reach are excellent. Data show very clearly that children who have attended the centre do exceptionally well by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The 'Learning Stories' provide a good record of each child's progress in all areas of learning. Parents value the opportunity to contribute to the 'Learning Stories'.

Adults access a wide range of activities and opportunities for learning, gaining confidence and qualifications which support them to prepare for future employment. The confidence of users is further enhanced by volunteering to help in the centre. Adults are helped and encouraged to develop skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. One grateful lone carer who now works as a course provider in the centre said, 'The centre helped me cope with an unexpected course of events and now I feel energised and confident to tackle new skills such as teaching. I also value the opportunity to give something back to the centre.' The Parents' Forum is well established. It has been renamed 'Woodlands' Voice' and gives parents an excellent opportunity to contribute to the governance of the centre and its plans for further development.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare	1

concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	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?

1

The centre knows its users well and it collects data about the progress made by children and adults, the take up of services and the increasing reach. This is used sensitively and effectively to plan activities that are focused on users' needs. Systems to collect this data are rigorous and cover all aspects, but they often take time to analyse. Health visitors, churches and education professionals work very effectively with the centre to assess and review the welfare needs of users and target groups. There are excellent links with local schools and other agencies that effectively inform assessments to meet learners' individual needs well. The provision to help children learn and achieve is excellent. Activities, trips and sessions to help children prepare for school are outstanding.

The two sessions to support carers who are new to this country and who speak English as an additional language are extremely popular and well attended. Users cannot speak highly enough of the support they receive. The centre is responding to the needs of fathers and is developing courses to help them look after their children. The quality of care and support for vulnerable families is outstanding, as is the care and guidance of children who attend the childcare crèche and the many other courses. All workers at the centre show a passion for their work and awareness of the management strategies needed to overcome day-to-day problems. Hence, when they see parents they immediately offer support and encouragement. Parents say this has played a major part in their success. Personal development and achievement are celebrated very effectively with the adult and children graduation ceremony held annually.

Parents of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive high levels of support in the 'Chill and Chat' sessions. This helps them cope on a practical basis with the stresses of managing the extra work and emotional impact of their situation. One parent said that the support that she received from the centre was a lifeline and she now knows what steps she needs to take her forward. The parents and carers are able to receive guidance and support for their child at the earliest stage to alleviate concerns.

Excellent parenting support enhances the knowledge, confidence and abilities of

parents in raising their children. Parents comment extremely positively on the quality of courses, such as baby peeps, baby signing and baby massage, in helping them establish a calm bond with their babies. There is a wide range of literature and guidance available for parents to help them make choices about issues such as immunisation and to clarify their understanding of how they can keep their children safe and support their learning. At times of crisis parents are extremely well supported. This is largely due to the relationships between staff and users. Users see the centre as an extremely safe place where they can share their problems and can feel confident that swift and effective solutions or support will be provided. The quality of information, advice and guidance for parents seeking work is exemplary.

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	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The inspirational and dynamic leadership is pivotal in driving improvement and promoting ambition so that staff are extremely reflective practitioners who are clearly focused on providing high-quality services. All work together superbly to ensure that the work of the centre runs very smoothly. The flexible deployment of staff, volunteers and resources ensures excellent value for money. Finances are organised very effectively to ensure the centre is never in arrears. Leaders' excellent knowledge of the centre's strengths and areas to be improved underpins their passionate commitment to continuous improvement. Outcomes for the large majority of families, including target groups and those in most need of intervention and support, are excellent. Parents and carers commented that the centre manager goes more than the extra mile to engage disadvantaged and disaffected parents within the reach area. The centre is the main community focus for the estate. This was clearly evident in the community response to the royal wedding celebrations.

The governors provide high levels of challenge to the centre and contribute most effectively to ensuring the high-quality provision and safeguarding procedures. There are rigorous recruitment checks and arrangements for professional supervision. All staff working at the centre have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. The centre ensures all partners are fully trained and that safeguarding procedures are known to all and effectively carried out. Policies are clear and implemented fully and risk assessments are rigorous and monitored to a high standard. Support and courses for those who are subject to domestic violence are excellent.

The centre is successfully engaging with more users in the reach area through an extremely wide range of partnership links and through the centre’s excellent knowledge of its own reach area. Early intervention to support those who are vulnerable is a priority. This is supported extremely well by specialist support providing a seamless service for parents and children. Partners commented how much they enjoyed working with the centre. This, in turn, results in the centre engaging with more users from its locality.

Users’ evaluations of activities and courses and their responses to questionnaires are extremely positive. The views of parents and users are constantly sought and acted upon. The ‘Woodlands’ Voice’ regularly feeds parents’ views into the governing body. The centre promotes the inclusion of all families within the reach area and celebrates diversity exceptionally well. It gathers valuable information about the different groups of users and evaluates their engagement. For example, case study evidence indicates that the centre has been very effective in working with children and parents who are experiencing difficulties at home and those from minority ethnic groups. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well provided for, both in the physical accessibility of the building and through excellent access to appropriate professional support.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Woodlands Children's Centre on 28 and 29 September 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank those of you we met and who spoke to us about the centre and its work. It was a great help to us. We agree with you that the centre is an excellent place for you and your children to attend and that all the staff involved in the centre's work do a superb job to help you all. You told us how friendly and approachable everyone is and how happy you and your children are when they are in the centre. We could see that those of you who use the centre regularly enjoy and benefit from all it has to offer, such as the 'Stay and Play'.

We think the wide range of things that the centre plans for you is excellent. We were particularly pleased to see how you were all involved in creating your children's 'Learning Stories'.

The centre helps you in so many ways, for example the support it provides for lone parents and those of you who are experiencing domestic difficulties. It provides valuable support and practical help to make your homes safer for your children and useful guidance to help you with their learning. You all contribute to the decision making very well through the 'Woodlands' Voice'. Your children make excellent progress in their learning and behave extremely well because they thoroughly enjoy all the activities offered. The smooth transition from the centre to Gilbert Scott School is excellent. The 'Stay and Play' and other activities are outstanding. The children thoroughly enjoyed the baby café, learning to eat fruit and enjoying the wide range of activities.

All of the people who work at the centre do an excellent job and the centre manager is inspirational. There is an outstanding sense of teamwork, especially among the leaders, school governors and all those who use the centre. The work that they do to assess what is needed and to put plans in place to make things even better is excellent, although the systems they use could be improved.

The centre ensures that children and users are extremely safe and well protected. Staff are all very experienced, well trained and regularly update their training in safety aspects. Your children's security and safety are of the highest priority and excellent records are kept to ensure that all who work at the centre are properly qualified and meticulously checked.

It was a pleasure to meet you during the inspection and to hear your views. We hope that you and your children and many more families who live in and around the Woodland area will continue to enjoy and benefit from the many activities and services the centre offers. Thank you again for contributing to the inspection by sharing your comments and thoughts so openly.

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