

Inspection report for Fairchildes Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Croydon
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Reporting inspector	Penny Mathers

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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 manager and staff, senior leaders of the school, representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies, such as the health services, parents and other users of the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Fairchildes Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in January 2008 with full core purpose delivering health, education, family support and childcare. The centre's building has been part of the community for many years. In recent years it has been considerably updated and extended.

The centre is located in the south east of Croydon in New Addington ward. It is in the same road as Fairchildes Primary School and Addington High School. The ward has four areas which are among the most deprived in England, including one which falls in the top 5% most deprived nationally.

The families that use the centre are mostly White British with 11% from a minority ethnic background. The percentage of social housing is high. A quarter of people living in the ward have low-paying jobs and 23% are claiming benefits. A larger percentage of workers are employed in manual labour compared to the rest of Croydon. Crime, mostly criminal damage, is higher than in other wards in the borough. Children's ability levels on entry to early years provision are below those expected for their age.

Fairchildes Children’s Centre is part of a collaboration made up of three children’s centres including Castle Hill Children’s Centre and the Family Centre. The centres work together to meet the community’s needs. Governance of the centre is supported by an advisory board which is chaired by the headteacher of Fairchildes Primary School.

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

Fairchildes Children’s Centre makes good provision for its users and it is an important part of the community it serves. The centre is effective in improving outcomes for families in the reach area. Children who have attended the centre make good progress at the primary school, settling and behaving well. The well-being of families and individual children has been increased through the services provided and through the opportunities given to families to meet others and enjoy shared activities. The friendly staff and welcoming atmosphere quickly ensure families feel safe and comfortable at the centre. They trust the staff and enjoy the activities.

Clear, effective leadership enables staff to work well together. The advisory board provides a clear vision and has been keen to encourage staff to be innovative. Finances are well managed and are carefully matched to the needs of the community. The local authority provides a good set of reach data to support planning and provision but it is working to improve the quality and usefulness of the data even more. There is a good development plan in place which has effectively informed the centre’s activities and matched them well to resources. However, there are parts where it lacks sufficient clarity, particularly in the identification of target groups.

Partnerships with a wide range of agencies are strong, helping to identify and respond to the needs of the more vulnerable families in the community. There is evidence of good outcomes from these partnerships. For example, the new sensory room, created in partnership with health services, is improving the behaviour of children, while the holiday activities run in partnership with the school are

contributing to a reduction in anti-social behaviour. Multi-agency work is also contributing effectively to the reduction in domestic violence. In the centre itself, safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and effective.

The centre's self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate and contributes to well-informed planning which leads to good provision and outcomes for families. The strong commitment of leaders, managers and staff, combined with good partnership working and good quality care and support, means the centre has a good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should continue to improve the quality and range of the data on the reach area to enable the centre to target its resources even more effectively.
- The centre should improve the quality of the development plan by defining more clearly the target groups within its reach area, so ensuring that its resources are directed even more efficiently towards the families who are not yet benefiting fully from its services.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Healthy lifestyles are promoted well through personalised contact with individuals and families, a wide range of activities and an extensive display of posters. Keep fit, swimming, smoking cessation, cooking and healthy eating, breastfeeding support, and advice on weaning and feeding all contribute well to improving families' health, fitness and well-being. All of these sessions are well attended and families are aware of what they need to do to develop healthy lifestyles and are taking action to improve. However, breastfeeding rates are not as high as in other parts of the borough.

Teenagers make good use of the sexual health information clinics, which offer information and contraception advice. There is good evidence from schools that this is having a positive impact. Great care has been taken to develop the centre as a focus for improving mental health. Part of this is its environment, which includes many green areas, relaxation areas and a superb sensory room that is used by families and individual children, including those who are disabled. There is a gardening club and a small garden which also promote understanding of healthy living. Families report their mental health has improved.

Families say they feel very safe when attending the centre and they are aware of its promotion of safety. Staff are proactive in directing families to a scheme supplying

home safety equipment. Safeguarding policies and procedures are comprehensive and up to date. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and they know who to refer to if they have any concerns. Referral systems are well established and staff contribute effectively to the Common Assessment Framework process (CAF); they use an effective system to track children’s progress and safety. This is also the case for children subject to child protection plans. The centre’s work with families subject to domestic violence is a developing area.

Support for parenting is improving outcomes for those parents who experience difficulties with children’s behaviour. Many parents are improving their confidence in parenting and are becoming increasingly willing to share their concerns with staff and with their peers in discussion sessions. Many families develop a feeling of well-being as well as improving social skills by attending holiday activities provided by the centre and making visits, such as a coach trip to Brighton and a day trip to a rare breeds farm. Holiday activities are planned in conjunction with the school so activities are available for all age groups. The centre continues its efforts to engage more families in its services, particularly those most in need of support.

The centre’s support for developing children’s skills is good. As a result, children make good progress in their learning and development and are well prepared for school. Ninety-one per cent of children attending the local primary school have attended the children’s centre and the percentage attaining the expected level at the end of Reception year is higher than for those who have not attended the centre. Their attendance is also better. Staff encourage parents to take up training programmes, offer advice and signpost to adult learning. While take-up rates are good, the centre is seeking to engage more families in these activities.

Children and families express their views freely at the Parents’ Forum and minutes of meetings indicate that members’ views are taken into account. The good number who attend treat one another with respect. Many parents volunteer to help at events and a number are involved in growing vegetables for free distribution to families. Parents attend training and are gaining qualifications leading to volunteering and employment. For example, a large number of parents have attended a childcare course leading to qualifications in childminding and they do voluntary work in the centre on a regular basis.

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's responsiveness to the needs of the community is good and improving. It is suitably located in the centre of the reach area and is well known to people living nearby. The number of people having contact with the centre is increasing month by month. In the last year the number of families attending with a child under the age of five has increased by 23%. Outreach staff have been particularly effective in finding and then supporting those who have been reluctant to attend, although leaders are aware more remains to be done in this area. The centre is utilised well by teenagers, lone parents, families with disabled children, children in workless households and young mothers. The activities for these target groups are planned effectively to improve outcomes. Good examples include the training programmes for childcare, numeracy and English.

Assessment of families' needs is robust and ensures services are suitably tailored to these needs. For example, teenage parents attend 'Little Munchkins' and learn how to help their children learn and develop. Children's achievements are successfully captured in 'learning logs' given to families as a record for when their children go on to school.

Through the very good relationship with the local adult learning provision, a range of courses is available to support those without jobs and this has led to parents moving into work. For example, a successful course on sewing has resulted in parents setting up their own businesses and others have learnt how to use a sewing machine and repair clothes. Parents are also helped to take more advanced courses at the local education college. There are good relationships with a range of local agencies offering employment help and advice.

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

Day-to-day oversight of the centre is good. It is led by the head of the centre. Staff have a very clear understanding of what is expected of them and their performance is regularly reviewed. The advisory board meets regularly and has a good understanding of the community. It has demonstrated a commitment to encourage continuous improvement. Families using the centre are well represented on the board.

Self-evaluation is good. Activities are regularly evaluated and staff are responsive to feedback from centre users. The evaluation influences effectively what the centre provides; there is a useful development plan which, for the most part, clearly matches the community's needs to the resources available to address them. However, it lacks sharpness in parts; for example, in its identification of target groups. The self-evaluation process contributes strongly to the good outcomes, good provision and the good value for money.

The reach and other data provided by the local authority are good and have contributed to the good outcomes. However, rightly, the authority is currently seeking to improve the range and accuracy of the data to enable the centre to target resources even more effectively.

The extent to which the centre supports equality is good. All are made welcome and staff are sensitive to individual needs and to the needs of different groups. To support this, staff have visited every house in the most deprived area to encourage contact. Strong efforts have been made to engage with Travellers by meeting with them on their sites and other groups such as fathers now have sessions devoted to them, such as 'Pie and Pint'. Centre staff have contacted all faith groups and some other groups in the area in order to reach minority ethnic groups. All these arrangements are relatively new but overall, the results are promising.

The arrangements for safeguarding families in the reach area are good. Risk assessments are undertaken for the centre and for visits and any actions required are promptly addressed. Staff feel safe and there is a clear staff safety policy for outreach visits. The centre works well with a wide range of partner bodies to ensure that the vulnerable are helped and are safe. Staff work well with other agencies in safeguarding children and there are good relationships with the police and fire brigade. Safeguarding conferences are regularly held at the centre and staff contribute well to these. Staff vetting procedures are rigorous.

Good partnership working with agencies has resulted in a wide range of integrated events, activities and courses for centre users. A well-attended and valued baby clinic is run by the health visitor once a week. Particularly good links with the primary school benefit both children and their parents. Satisfaction rates in questionnaires and parents spoken to by inspectors report strong satisfaction with the centre's services and their impact on outcomes for families. Many parents say their contact

with the centre has been 'life changing'.

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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Fairchildes Children's Centre on 28 and 29 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we inspected your centre's plans for the future and numerous documents, including your evaluations of activities. We spoke to a wide range of agencies that work with the centre, as well as staff, members of the advisory board, school staff and representatives from the local authority and health service. We visited activities including Little Munchkins, the parents' forum and the sexual health clinic and we spoke to many families using the centre.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection. It was very helpful to have your views and hear how positive you all feel about the centre and especially the support you receive from the staff. The following comments sum up the views of many we spoke to: 'staff never forget you, they are so welcoming' and 'the centre has made me feel I am still a person and worth it – staff are real life savers'.

We agree that the centre staff provide good care, guidance and support. They are well qualified, know the area well and know many of you well. This enables them to match activities and courses to your needs. The centre has developed many effective partnerships to call upon to get you the help you need. Staff are quick to spot any safeguarding concerns and act quickly to make sure children are safeguarded well. As a result you have told us you feel safe and secure at the centre and trust the staff to listen to and support you.

You enjoy your contact with the centre and its staff and see the benefits. For example many of you have gained qualifications, developed greater confidence in parenting and extended your knowledge of healthy eating. You value the support for breastfeeding and weaning and advice about sexual health. Children make good progress with their learning and personal development and find the transition to primary school easy. The centre is receptive to your feedback and keen to improve further.

The centre is well resourced and managed with a clear plan in place for developing its services in the future. Self-evaluation is good and is helped by the provision of good statistical information from the local authority. However, there is always room for improvement so we have asked the local authority to provide an even better range of accurate data so that the centre can check more effectively how well it is doing. We have also asked the centre to highlight more clearly in its plans how it will improve services for specific groups in your area.

The strong commitment that leaders, managers and staff demonstrate, the impact they have already had on many families, combined with good support and willingness to improve mean the centre is in a good position to continue to improve.

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