

# Overview of Croydon and its learning environment

## Croydon – a thumbnail sketch

Croydon is a thriving town rich in cultural diversity and with excellent social and leisure facilities. Close to Gatwick and Heathrow airports, it is only 15 minutes from central London by train and is in easy reach of the south coast and the Surrey and Kent countryside.

Covering 33.4 square miles, of which 30% is in green belt, Croydon is the 10th largest local authority district in England and Wales. With a population of 334,000, it also has the largest population of any of the London boroughs, of which ethnic minority communities make up a significant and increasing part.

Croydon has a diverse economy, similar in size and complexity to many large cities, and one of the largest commercial and retail centres in the UK. Its town centre has recently been refurbished and is a major attraction. Croydon Council and other local agencies are working

hard to address the existing social and economic inequalities and pockets of deprivation elsewhere in the Borough - and continue to be successful in drawing down additional funding from Government and Europe for this purpose.

The cultural scene in Croydon has been much enriched by the development of the Clocktower arts and library complex. A £2.1 Millennium Commission grant has also enabled the town centre's hallmark high rise buildings to be illuminated at night in spectacular fashion. Croydon has also won great acclaim for its innovative £200m 18-mile light rail project, Tramlink, which is providing an effective alternative to private car use and has hugely improved the cross-Borough transport options.

In short, Croydon is a dynamic, vibrant and exciting place in which to live and work. Its facilities and infrastructure are being improved still further. And the determination felt by Croydon Council and other local organisations to forge productive partnerships, and constantly improve services to those who have made Croydon their choice, bodes well for us all.

## Croydon Council – an overview

Croydon Council is determined to be at the forefront of modernising local government and prides itself on being a test bed for Government initiatives – in the education arena, for

example, Croydon was awarded a first round Education Action Zone by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and is a pilot Authority for the DfES' Excellence in Cities Cluster initiative and the Early Professional Development Project for teachers in their second and third years of teaching.

The most recent publication of local government performance indicators by the Audit Commission supports Croydon's position as one of the most efficient Councils in London, appearing amongst the top 5 in four out of twenty categories highlighted for UK-wide comparisons.

The Council is firmly committed to Best Value, a Government initiative introduced in April 2000, the aim of which is for local authorities to achieve continuous improvement in the way their functions are exercised.

In order to do this, authorities have to carry out a review of all the services that they provide over a period of 5 years. In the Education Department, financial services, support for pupils with special needs and pupil transport have already been reviewed and a review of the Personnel Service is under way.

Equally important is the pivotal role the Council plays in leading, facilitating and co-ordinating initiatives to ensure continuing prosperity and quality of life for those living, working and learning in Croydon. Much of this activity is covered by the over-arching Croydon Partnership, an umbrella organisation which brings together organisations from the private, public and voluntary sectors to play a key role in the development and long-term prosperity of the Borough. Its success in this respect is reflected in Croydon Council being one of the first local authorities to achieve the Government's 'Pathfinder Authority' status and runner-up in the Local Government Chronicle Awards for Excellence in the 'Best Public/Private Partnership' category.

## Croydon Local Education Authority

As an integral part of Croydon Council, the Local Education Authority (LEA) is based in the Council's main offices at Taberner House in central Croydon. However, as is reflected in this document, many of its services are located elsewhere in the Borough, including on school premises and dedicated sites.

Three key objectives underpin all aspects of the Authority's work:

- to provide a wide range of learning opportunities that meet the needs and anticipate the demands of individuals and the wider community
- to secure high levels of achievement through high quality learning opportunities
- to secure access and increasing participation through high quality information and advice services.

The Authority believes that these objectives can only be realised through effective working with schools (see section B - Services to Schools), with pupils, parents and carers, and other learners (see section C - Services to Teachers, Learners, Parents and Carers) and with other local organisations (see 'Partnership Working' below).

To facilitate these objectives, the Department is organised into three groups, under the leadership of the Director of Education, Dr David Sands:

- **INFORMATION & MANAGEMENT SERVICES:** responsible for providing financial and support services to schools and other educational establishments.  
*Group Director, **Andy Parkin***
- **QUALITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP:** responsible for monitoring and raising standards of achievement throughout the Borough's schools.  
*Group Director, **RoseAnne Ellis***

- **STUDENT SERVICES GROUP:** responsible for addressing the needs of children out-of-school and those with special needs and for developing partnerships to promote out-of-school learning.  
*Group Director, Alan Malarkey*

Section B of this information pack describes the main services offered to schools through the Management and Information Services Group and the Quality Development Group.

Section C describes the main services offered, either directly or through schools and other organisations, to support individual pupils, parents and carers and other learners.

## Learning opportunities in Croydon

### Early years (pre-school education and reception classes)

Croydon provides reception class places for all children during the Autumn term of the year after their fourth birthday and part time nursery class places for about 70% of children from the Autumn term after their third birthday. Children can also access early education in pre-schools, day nurseries and independent schools, with funding currently available for all four year olds and an increasing number of three year olds.



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### Primary sector

There are 93 primary schools in the Borough which are maintained by Croydon LEA. Of these twenty-two are infant schools for pupils aged 4-7, twenty-three are junior schools for pupils aged 8-11 and 48 are all-through primary schools. Nearly 80% of the infant and primary schools have nursery classes for three and four-year olds. Five of the primary schools have been awarded 'Beacon' status – in other words, their

exceptionally good practice has been recognised at national level and it now receives additional funding to work with other schools in the area.

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### Secondary sector

There are 21 secondary schools maintained by the Authority, of which 11 are foundation schools. Most of these are 11-16 schools except four denominational schools which have their own sixth forms. There are also productive and innovative links with independent schools and the two City Technology Colleges in Croydon – the Harris City Technology College and the BRIT College for Performing Arts. One secondary school has achieved Beacon status and another has been awarded Technology College status; others are applying for PE, arts and modern languages specialist school status. Support for study outside school is a major area of growth, with four key projects: out-of-school learning, the Crystal Palace Study Support Centre, library-based study support centres in Norbury and New Addington and a range of support activities offered by the Youth Service.

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### Special sector

Croydon has 6 special schools which provide high quality learning opportunities for pupils with complex needs. There are presently about 550 pupils attending at the 6 schools, and the needs covered include moderate to severe learning difficulties, autism, physical and mobility difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and profound or multiple difficulties. There are close and regular links with mainstream schools and colleges and the schools are developing their role as centres of excellence.

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### Further and Higher Education

In addition to the four denominational schools with sixth forms (Archbishop Tenison's CoE, Coloma RC Convent, St Joseph's RC College, Virgo Fidelis RC Convent Upper School), there are three colleges within the Borough



offering full- and part-time courses for 16-19 year olds and adults and the Authority's own Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS).

CROYDON COLLEGE, located in central Croydon, is one of the largest colleges of further and higher education in the UK and has approximately 12,000 students undertaking courses from foundation to master degree level. University links provide local people with a range of degree and post-graduate options. 30% of students attending the college are adults, mostly following vocational or degree level programmes.

JOHN RUSKIN COLLEGE, in the south-east of the Borough, is a sixth form college and a key partner in the New Addington Education Action Zone. Adult education programmes attract approximately 700 students per year into part-time 2 hours a week classes in IT, A-levels and languages.

COULSDON COLLEGE, in the south of the Borough, is also a sixth form college, offering a small evening adult education programme at its Downlands Centre.

## Adult education

Croydon's Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS) is the major supplier of adult education in Croydon, delivering a wide range of learning opportunities, from part-time evening provision in recreational and academic subjects to full-time pre-vocational and vocational courses. Approximately 19,000 adults per year enrol on over 2,000 courses provided at full-time centres and part-time community- and school-based activities across the Borough. CETS also operates a number of flexible learning centres with networked ICT facilities and internet links from which it offers Learndirect ([www.learndirect.com](http://www.learndirect.com)) provision. CETS has a specialism in vocational courses building on bilingual skills, developed in response to the needs and employment possibilities of Croydon's communities. CETS also has specialist Employment Training team and runs small business start-up training and Basic Skills at Work programmes.

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY offers higher education programmes in one of the CETS main centres.

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Private training providers are active in the Borough, delivering work-based learning for adults and New Deal services as well as courses charged at commercial rates, including business and IT and English as a Foreign Language training.

Other post-16 learning opportunities are offered by:

- Croydon Council's Library Service, Museum and Heritage Service
- Housing and Social Services Departments.


Voluntary and community organisations are also important providers within the Borough.

## Partnership Working

Partnership working is a vital part of the Education Authority's role because of the many ways in which learning and skills link with, for example, economic regeneration activity, housing policy, health, community planning and leadership, social services provision and equality issues.

## Lifelong learning

In 2000, the Authority established the *Croydon Lifelong Learning Forum* to bring together the whole range of local organisations – schools, colleges, training providers, careers and advisory services, other Council service providers, employers, voluntary and community organisations – involved in post-16 learning. The Forum meets regularly in inclusive and informal meetings to discuss different aspects of post-compulsory education and training, agreeing action where a partnership approach is likely to add value. This has included, for example, co-ordinating bids for on-line learning centres in Croydon and the establishment of a small fund and tailored workshops to help build the capacity of



community groups to deliver learning opportunities. The Forum is supported by a core, multi-agency Lifelong Learning Policy Group.

Representatives from the LEA and the Lifelong Learning Forum are active in the *South London Learning Partnership* (SLLP) which covers the boroughs of Bromley, Kingston, Merton, Sutton and Richmond. This multi-agency organisation investigates and articulates the learning and skill needs of individuals and employers at the sub-regional level. The SLLP communicates this information to the London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which is responsible for planning and funding the whole range of post-16 learning (other than higher education). The London South LSC, based in Croydon town centre, is managed by a Board which draws on the experience and expertise of high profile local people.

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## Croydon Education Business Partnership

Croydon Education Business Partnership (CEBP) encourages education, business and the wider community to work in partnership to raise attainment, promote lifelong learning and help young people develop the key skills which are essential for the world of work. CEBP provides professional development placements for teachers in the world of work, support for student work experience, mentoring of young people by adults from local businesses, key skills workshops, the Newspapers in Education programme and a wide range of education business link initiatives and projects. Induction and training is provided by CEBP for teachers and business volunteers participating in these activities.

Croydon Work Experience (CWE) is managed by CEBP, offering a centralised service working with schools and colleges, business and industry to provide programmes of work experience for Croydon students. CWE takes

care of the whole process from initial employer visits through brokerage for specific placements to student preparation and teacher visits. CWE uses a wide range of tools (briefings, a support network, monitoring) to ensure that its programmes meet national quality standards.

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## Early years and childcare

The Authority facilitates the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. This Partnership draws together those involved in these areas and has responsibility for planning the local delivery of the Government's commitments to developing the provision of free early education and childcare places.

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## Health

There is a close working relationship with Croydon Health Authority, Croydon and Surrey Downs Community NHS Trust and other health services, particularly in relation to health education and promotion and supporting children with medical needs.

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## Sure Start Partnership

The Authority is currently the lead agency for the Sure Start Partnership, although as this becomes established



this role will be passed to others. The Sure Start programme is designed to invest in and enhance the services for families with children under 4 in a small identified area - the Broad Green ward.

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## The New Addington Education Action Zone (EAZ)

The Education Action Zone, covering the nine maintained schools in New Addington, was set up in the first round of this national initiative by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The EAZ supports innovative approaches to raising educational standards in the area. Successful projects have included breakfast clubs (which have improved school attendance), homework clubs, an in-school counselling service for pupils, strategies to raise standards in literacy, and ICT and other training for staff.

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## The Excellence in Cities Cluster

The Excellence in Cities Cluster comprises seven secondary schools located mostly in the north of the Borough, together with seven of their partner primary schools. Established in 2001 in response to a DfES invitation, the cluster is raising pupils' attainment through three main strands of activity: support for gifted and talented pupils; provision of learning mentors; and, in four schools, provision of Learning Support Units. As the cluster becomes established, a further strand tailored to local needs will be developed.

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