

INVESTING IN CHILDREN

Membership Evaluation

Date April 2005

PROJECT NAME Newburn Manor Nursery School

PROJECT LOCATION 9 Townfield Gardens
Newburn
Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 8PY

CONTACT NAME Mrs Jane McFadyen
PHONE 0191 267 4533
E-MAIL admin@newburnmanorprimary.newcastle.sch.uk

ASSESSOR B Stock

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The nursery school has 78 children. The emphasis at the nursery was on the active involvement of children in their own learning, which involves lots of talking between staff and children about what they are doing together. Also the nursery school believes in encouraging children to make choices and develop independence by having equipment and materials available for children to choose from. The children talked about how many different things there are to do at nursery and the atmosphere created was relaxed where children and their parents were involved in the life of the school.

Sector School
Ages 3-5 years
Area North
Ward Newburn

Number of beneficiaries 78



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

Newburn Manor Nursery School

Newburn Manor Nursery School is situated in the rural area of northwest Newcastle upon Tyne. Children travel in from a wide area, the school is extremely popular and is currently oversubscribed. Newburn caters for 78 children arranged in 3 classes with a ratio of 1 adult to 8 children.

I visited the school in March 2005 and met with the Head teacher, Celia Skillbeck, members her staff team and some of the children. My first impression was of a warm and welcoming environment, a very busy place with all of the children engaged and involved in one activity or another. I was shown around the building, which consists of a main indoor area, a well-equipped playground and a covered play area for games and activities.

The school produces a number of different booklets and guides for parents, governors and staff, which are on display around the building. Also on display is a set of principles on which school life is based. Celia explained some of these to me.

“Children must be actively involved in their own learning”

One of the practical ways this is achieved at Newburn is for children to be involved in designing the characters, stories, environments (etc) for the planned curriculum delivery and also their involvement in planning and reviewing activities, which is supported by their parents/carers first thing in the morning. During my visit I also noticed lots of conversations between children and staff about what there were doing together.

“Encourage children to make choices and develop independence by having equipment and materials readily available and well organised”

The school believes that the best use of space and equipment can be made if children are allowed to choose. This is clearly evident and in my conversations with the children they explained how many different things there are to do at Newburn. They are supported by the organisation of the environment to be independent and have free access to all materials and equipment.

Celia explained the importance of ‘play’ and the way well structured activities can encourage *“thinking and decision making”* A number of the activities are quite challenging and geared toward problem solving. The children I talked with certainly enjoyed the range of things on offer.

“Families must be recognised as partners in their children’s education”

The school places a lot of emphasis on parental and family involvement and uses the concept of 'conferences' involving the child and family to influence decision-making. Children are asked their views about likes/dislikes, friendships etc. and then parents are invited to come in and talk to their child's teaching team about all aspects of development and curriculum. At the end of this "conference" period (termly) the staff look for whole school issues which we can address as well as individual or group issues.

Some parents, who were trained at the school, now work at the school as classroom assistants.

Throughout all my conversations at Newburn I picked up phrases such as – "non-directional" and "children leading". These also appear in the school's publications and philosophy statement. I was also sensed a relaxed atmosphere where, despite lots of energy and activity, there were no raised voices, just lots of children and adults involved in what they were doing.

The Head teacher and her staff team clearly have a vision for the school and are working toward change and improvement; however, during my short visit I also sensed a real commitment to change through dialogue with the children who use the service. I therefore recommend that Newburn Manor Nursery School be awarded Investing in Children membership.

B.Stock
21st April 2005

Where parents are partners

One of the principles of Newburn Manor Nursery School is that the children must be actively involved in their own learning. For example, they help design the characters, stories and environments used to deliver the curriculum. They also plan and review activities along with their parents or carers first thing in the morning.

The school believes the best use of space and equipment can be made if children are allowed to choose what they want to do, and have free access to materials. This also encourages them to be independent. Well-structured – and occasionally challenging – activities encourage them to think, solve problems and make decisions.

The school sees families as partners in children's education. They are encouraged to take part in conferences each term where individual, group and whole-school issues are discussed.

“Throughout all my conversations at Newburn I picked up phrases such as – ‘non-directional’ and ‘children leading’,” says the Investing in Children assessor. “I also sensed a relaxed atmosphere where – despite lots of energy and activity – there were no raised voices.”

“...non-directional and children leading...”

[possible pics – children choosing and using materials/equipment, or a conference with parents]