



INVESTING IN CHILDREN

Membership Evaluation

Date May 2005

PROJECT NAME Valley View Nursery (Closed July 2006)

PROJECT LOCATION Newcastle upon Tyne

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The nursery caters for 40 children and the staff and children have managed to create a family atmosphere that thrives on lots of discussion. An example is the "red wellies" which were the children's suggestion to cope with the muddy nursery garden, so the staff sought funding for red wellingtons that could be kept in the nursery. The children are encouraged to make choices and decisions and their views influence what happens, e.g. three computers are available for children to use at any time and the children say if they enjoy the game or not, and this is recorded by happy and sad faces – these comments are used to decide which software is kept by the nursery.

Sector School

Ages 0-5 years

Area West

Ward Scotswood & Benwell

Number of beneficiaries



investing in children

Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

Valley View Nursery

'At Valley View we are committed towards involving our children and parents in making choices about the Nursery. We strive to provide opportunities for dialogue and discussion in order to involve the whole nursery community in decision making processes. This allows the parents, staff and children to have ownership of any changes or new initiatives.

There are many contexts in which children and parents are involved in dialogue and discussion about decision making. Some of these examples are evident on a daily basis, whereas other examples arise less regularly or relate only to one off contexts'. (Taken from written information prepared for Investing in Children by Valley View Nursery.)

I visited Valley View Nursery to chat and play with some of the 40 children who attend. Some children are at the nursery for two years, depending on when their birthday is determines at what point after three they join the nursery ' family.'

I use the word family because the whole unit feels like one large family, especially with the daily support of Auntie Maureen, Auntie Dot and Auntie Betty, as well as the rest of the staff team.

Anthony, Paige, Chantelle, Elle, Brandon, Max, Charlotte, Phillip, Mrs Barlow, Mrs Cheetam and I sat together over coffee and milk to chat about what happens in Valley View Nursery.

Anthony was eager to tell me about an Awards Ceremony he went to. Anthony said **'I got a certificate, and its up on the wall.'** He thought for a while and said **'I had a tuna and sweetcorn sandwich'** what a memory! The nursery actually won the nursery section of the **Lord Mayors Cup** for a project named 'Sculpture Culture.' The children were taken in small groups to observe a range of sculptures including those at Newcastle Quays and the Angel of the North.

We talked about **the Wellies** that the nursery have. Lots of bright red wellies to enable the children to play outside in all weathers i.e. **'In the splodgy mud'** said Anthony and **'at Santa time'** said Brandon. Max said **'yes in the snow and we threw snowballs.'**



The wellies were bought with funding from Surestart Armstrong.

The nursery boasts a beautiful outdoor play area including the 'Nursery Garden' and due to the lovely British weather its often muddy ***so a small group of staff and children sat down and talked about what they could do to stop the mud coming into school. The children suggested wellies the staff sought funding rather than ask parents to provide them.***

The outdoor area is split into two sections, a soft play park area and the nursery garden. The children told me about the equipment in the yard. Max said ***I like the bike with two seats***' a special bike which allows one child to have a ride on the back seat. Brandon said ***'see my muscles – I ride the bike.'*** Anthony said ***'I like the scooter.'*** The children chose all of the equipment in the yard from catalogues.

I went outside and the children were happily playing in all corners right through into the nursery garden. One teacher gracefully singing whilst a group of budding ballerina's twirled and pivoted on the decking.

The nursery garden was developed with the help of a lottery grant.

During the time I was at Valley View the children went from a 'time out' drinking milk to ***a play session when they were free to play where they wanted, most of the children were outside but one or two played on the computers.***

There are three computers in the nursery which the children are free to access whenever they want to. There are many games on the desktop and with practice the children are able to open and close the games they want to play on. Anthony said ***'I can do it by myself.'*** When the nursery receives software *the children play on the games and say if they enjoy the game or not.* On the bookcase there are recording sheets, the staff record how each child who plays on the game feels, a happy face if they enjoy it and a sad face if they don't enjoy it, ***there comments decide if the nursery kept the software or not.***

During this time staff set up for lunch, *with a little help from Olivia*, whilst Auntie Maureen was busy preparing the food. The children then came in for half an hour quiet time either singing or sharing stories. For this activity they are split into two groups, the children came in hung up their coats, took off their wellies and went to where they should be quite happily and very confidently.

Although there are 40 children in the nursery the day runs very smoothly, at this point in the term. Mrs Barlow said that when the children start nursery in September it does then take a little while to settle in. However, Mrs Barlow also said that *the older children who come back for a second year enjoy helping the little ones and showing them the routine.*

During my visit I talked to Mrs Barlow about what other opportunities the children have in Valley View Nursery and these are some of the things they talked about.



The Smartboard

this allows the children to have interactive storytime, which they all enjoy.



The Water Cooler – the children are free to access a drink of water whenever they want. A bag contains the plastic cups and there is a little plastic bin for the children to put their used cups. This water cooler was gained by a grant, ***the application was supported by children's comments and ideas.***

The Healthy School Award – the nursery are working towards this award and they are encouraged to make healthy choices including choosing a healthy snack at group time.

Dansi – is used in the school, the little puppet who helps children to talk about how they feel about certain things, their likes and dislikes etc. Dansi as well as circle time gives the staff time to realise issues and concerns which can be dealt with and have an impact on the children.

Bridgewater Project – a new name and school logo was required for the creation of the new Children's Centre. (The nursery will eventually integrate with the local primary as the Children's Centre takes formation). Parents and children were consulted and a competition was set up. Children were encouraged to make suggestions and draw logos. The winner will be chosen to work alongside a local artist.

ICT – last year the nursery created a CD Rom called "First Footsteps to Fitness" which introduced the children to ways to be healthy and keep healthy. The CD won an ICT Award (a new computer for the nursery!) and a group of children were invited to the conference to talk about it.

This years ICT project is about behaviour – good and bad. It's about what can and can not be done in nursery. The behaviour is demonstrated by Archie and Annie, large puppets who are pictured showing a variety of different behaviour in the nursery. The children click on certain areas to reveal what's good and what's not. The children get a little clap when they get the answer right. *The children talked about what happens in nursery and those ideas are reflected in the CD.*

The children in Valley View Nursery are actively encouraged to use their imagination, be creative in what they do in turn having an impact on who they are. At this age children need to be provided with positive opportunities to make choices and decisions and this is certainly demonstrated in Valley View Nursery. Therefore, on behalf of the children in Valley View Nursery I would like to recommend they receive their Investing in Children membership.

Helen Mulhearn
Investing in Children
May 2005

Family approach

Valley View Nursery involves both children and parents in making choices about the nursery. The whole unit runs like one big family, with support from parents as well as staff.

For example, the nursery's garden is often muddy, so a small group of staff and children talked about what they could do to stop the mud coming into school. The children suggested red wellies, and the staff sought funding to buy them, rather than asking parents to provide them. The children have also chosen all the equipment in the yard from catalogues.

There are three computers, which the children can use whenever they want to, choosing for themselves the games they want to play. Anthony says, "I can do it by myself." When trying out new software, staff record how each child feels about it, and their comments influence the decision about whether or not to keep it.

Using a smartboard, the children have interactive story times. They can also get water from the cooler – bought as a result of their ideas – whenever they want. Dansi the puppet is used to help children talk about how they feel about their likes and dislikes, as well as circle time.

"...I can do it by myself..."

When the nursery was due to integrate with the primary school in a children's centre, a new name and logo were needed. There was a competition for parents and children to put forward their ideas.

The nursery created a CD called *First Footsteps to Fitness*, introducing children to ways of being and staying healthy. It won an award, and a group of children were invited to a conference to talk about it. The next CD project is about good and bad behaviour in the nursery, and will reflect the children's ideas.

"The children in Valley View Nursery are actively encouraged to use their imagination, be creative in what they do, and in turn have an impact on who they are," says the Investing in Children assessor.

[suggested pics – wellies, or Smartboard, or water cooler]