



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Children's Therapy – "It's in the Bag!" Project

"It's in the Bag!" is a kit which has been developed by a team of advisory teachers and therapists who recognised the need to work together, to develop activities to work with children who appear to have weaker motor skills than their peers. It uses everyday activities and games which have been carefully selected to promote different aspects of hand function. The kit is a large box filled with ten bags. Inside each bag are the necessary items for the activity, a booklet with background information, and a card with suggested activities and an explanation of their benefit.

The kit has been promoted in primary schools in County Durham by the Children's Therapy team and this entails therapy assistants working with a selected group of children from each school and staff members from the school, over a five week period. The kit is left at the school for the staff to continue using it with the children.

For this evaluation I met with some of the team and I went to some of the schools to meet with children who were using the kits. I had the pleasure of talking to Isaac, Lauren, Sophie, Elliot, Josh, Holly, Emily, Aryaman, Ben, Danny, Haley, and Aaron.

Evidence of Dialogue & Change

In developing the kit for the children to work with, staff had twenty different activities for the children to try. During this time the children were asked which bags they thought were the best activities. When asked what they liked best about the "It's in the Bag!" sessions some of the comments made by the children were:

"Colouring in. Making beans and sausages out of play dough. It has been good fun."

"Doing the play dough bag, making beans. It's been fun and I looked forward to it."

"Working very hard. I liked play dough the best."

"Play dough. I like coming."

"The printing, the play dough, the beads, everything!"

"I liked threading because I could do everything well."

"Being able to come, I enjoyed everything, the play dough."

"Working with Jayne and Steph, playing with the play dough, making necklaces."

"I enjoyed everything, playing with the play dough. I liked the people here. The meccano."

The children were also asked if there were any things they didn't like about the sessions. These are the answers they gave:

"Getting my hands dirty with the paint."

"I liked everything."

"The chalk."

"I've enjoyed everything."

"No."

"I liked everything."

"I like everything I do here."

“I like everything.”

“I didn’t like sorting things out.”

Based on the comments of the children and observations made by the staff the selection of bags was narrowed down to ten (see attached sheets). The children were asked to comment on what had changed for them since taking part in “It’s in the Bag!” and they came up with the following:

“I have learned how to cut out and colour better.”

“I have better writing.”

“I can now colour in between the lines.”

“I am good at writing.”

Parents and teachers were also asked to comment on the progress of the children and some of their comments were:

“I am delighted with both his progress and his attitude towards writing since starting the sessions. The only problem was he devastated when they finished!” – Mum

“George has a more positive attitude towards his work. The presentation has improved and his motor skills have also improved.” – Teacher

“We weren’t aware of how difficult he found things; I knew he found writing hard. We are praising him when he tries and encouraging him to try new things.” - Mum

When I accompanied Michelle, Jayne and Linda in schools on several occasions I saw the work in action. A small group of reception class aged children in each school came to work with them. The children were able to decide where they wanted to sit, who they wanted to work with, and which bag they’d like to choose. If more than one child wanted the same bag this was possible and they could do the activity together. They were given lots of encouragement and obviously enjoyed it. Isaac told me that “Twist It” was his favourite as you could build things with it; he was working with Michelle as he likes her a lot. Lauren was making necklaces with “Thread It” and said, **“I like this one.”** She wore the necklace she made and also made one for Michelle and one for me.

At another school I met Elliot, Josh, Aryaman, Holly and Emily. The girls decided to play with “Dough It” together, Holly told me, **“Emily is my best friend and I like working with her.”** When they started the activity they decided to make pizzas. They were rolling and cutting, and using plastic knives and forks. It was entirely up to the girls to decide what they were making and how they wanted to do it.

Aryaman was using the “Rub It” bag and making a collage. He was helped by Michelle, at first working hand over hand so that he understood how to do it. He was cutting out his pictures and gluing them. He was laughing and joking about the activity because the animals he kept cutting off the legs of heads of the animals he had made rubbings of, and thought it was great fun. Michelle laughed along with him, and encouraged him to cut out carefully.

I met Ben, Harry, Aaron, Haley and Danny at their school. Ben decided to use the “Twist It” bag. After some careful work he proudly told me, **“Did you know I’ve never built people by myself. It’s the first time. I’m like a builder.”**

Harry and Aaron played with the “Dough It” bag and Haley was busy with “Bead It”.

Danny worked on the “Fold It” bag with Linda and made an aeroplane. He and Linda went into the school hall to see if it could fly. After seeing Danny’s success Ben wanted to give it a try and after putting his bag away he was encouraged to make a plane.

The children who have taken part in the “It’s in the Bag!” sessions all told me they enjoyed coming to them. They are able to make decisions about how they want the session to run, who they prefer to work with, and what bag they would like to choose. Even once they have chosen the bag although the staff make suggestions about how they can use it, if the children decide to do something different they are fully encouraged and supported.

Staff ask for feedback from the children, their parents and their teachers for how the sessions have helped and to identify any changes in the children. They also monitor the use of the bags and listen to suggestions made by the children about what they enjoy and don’t enjoy about the sessions. One clear feeling from all of the children and the schools is that they would prefer the programme to last for longer. Currently the programme consists of five sessions, however, previously the programme had ten sessions, but due to funding constraints the team has been asked to reach more children, and therefore they have had to cut the number of sessions in each programme to run more programmes. Staff have adapted the programme to ensure the children still receive a high quality programme which is successful in developing hand function on children in a fun and interesting way. When I asked the children I met whether they felt that “It’s in the Bag!” should receive Investing in Children membership they all agreed and so along with to Isaac, Lauren, Sophie, Elliot, Josh, Holly, Emily, Aryaman, Ben, Danny, Haley, and Aaron I recommend they receive Investing in Children membership.

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