



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Monkchester Road Nursery

I visited Monkchester Road Nursery School in April 2007, I met with Anne Humble the head teacher.

Anne explained that the nursery caters for 104 children aged 3/4 years old, children are divided into 4 individual classrooms.

The nursery was brightly decorated and very busy, the children all seemed to be happy and engaged in various activities.

Anne talked about the children's daily routine stating that all the activities are very child centred – free choice in the morning, which leads on to circle time, during circle time the children have a choice of milk and fruit, children take turns to hand the fruit out to each other.

Anne explained what the "Fruit Chart" was all about –

" We have a fruit chart displayed within the nursery, this indicates who has tried various fruits, if the children have tried a different fruit they get placed on the reward chart."

Lauren told me –

" I have tried apple and pear."

At 10.30a.m the children have a choice of outdoor play.

Evidence of listening to children:

Within the nursery setting staff involve the children in choosing outdoor toys and equipment, Anne explained the new bins the nursery have purchased –

" We gave the children a choice of a Bear bin, Dolphin bin or a Frog bin, the children decided to go for the Bear and Dolphin bin, so this is what we now have."

Jodi from class three told me –

" I liked choosing the bin, dolphin one is the favourite."

Monkchester Road nursery understands that giving children a voice is very important and vitally important to do this at a level the children will understand.

Anne showed me various ways the nursery listen to the children, she showed me work sheets which they regularly use, for example asking the children 'what would you like to do within the new playground?' 'What makes you happy and sad about the playground?'

As part of the Learning Network, children and staff from Monkchester Road went along to the event,

‘ We were the only nursery to attend, we ran similar activities as the schools, our aim was to give the children a chance to speak out about nurseries and schools etc.. Most importantly to hear their voices, we did this in the form of a cut and stick activity of their ideal classroom.’

One little girl told me –

‘If you have nice hair you are a nice teacher.’

Wish Catcher:

This is situated in the outdoor area, children can put ideas of what they would like to wish for within the nursery.

Class Council:

Within circle time children and staff talk about different issues, for example – ‘ what makes you frightened?’

Children have the opportunity to choose their own stickers.

Song Time:

During song time each child gets to choose a song of their own choice, the children can sit next to who they like.

I asked one little girl about the songs she likes singing at song time, Elizabeth told me –

‘ I like singing ‘Little Star’ we sing this at nursery, I like it.’

Dialogue and Change:

Anne talked about the reasons behind the new sand pit explaining how staff adapt and change things to suit individual needs.

‘One child didn’t like the sand getting wet while it was left outside, so we purchased a sand pit with a roof attached to stop the damp affecting the sand.’

Displays:

As soon as I entered the nursery the display boards really caught my eye, children’s work had been displayed all around the nursery, this shows staff value the children’s work, I also noticed that children had commented on the displays, their thoughts were placed in speech bubbles around the displays.

Shannon showed me some of her work displayed on the wall –

‘ I drew this, do you like it? I like it on the wall.’

Newcastle City Council:

Staff wanted to hear what the children thought of their outdoor area's fence, they all went outside to observe the fence, and staff asked the children if they would like to write a letter to Newcastle City Council describing their damaged fence. The children agreed, they are still awaiting a response from the council.

Rain Coats:

Staff asked the children which rain coats they would prefer, the children were keen to try them out in the rain, so they did so. Anne explained –

‘The children gave their individual views and opinions on each individual rain coat, the children liked the blue ones best, so we bought the blue ones as promised.’

Elizabeth and Shannon told me that they liked playing in the rain with their rain coats –

‘We like colouring in and painting, and playing in the rain with the blue coats.’

Involving parents:

Anne stated –

‘We try to involve parents at every chance we have, recently we sent letters out to parents/carers asking them to ask their child what they liked and disliked within nursery, we analysed all the information we got back.’

Staff are now actively working on, *‘what makes the children sad within nursery.’*

Planning the toilets:

Children were actively involved in choosing the design for the new toilets.

Classrooms:

I was shown around the four classrooms, I had a chance to talk with the children and some of their teachers, and in all four of the classrooms I noticed the role play areas. I talked to class three's teacher, she explained that the children can choose their own role play area, in this class they decided to have a fire station, the children design and make their own props.

I noticed children have access to water as and when they wish, their water bottles have the child's photograph placed on the front so the children can recognise their own bottle.

I talked to Kacey while she was having a drink, she told me why she likes water –

‘I like water, it makes me feel happy, I have it all the time.’

The classrooms all have assessment boards situated on the walls, these are for staff to place post it notes on when they have observed something the children may have done or said, teachers can update their assessments from this.

I talked with Jodi from class three, she told me what she liked playing with in nursery –

‘I like playing outside, drawing, playing in the sand with Kacey.’

Jessica told me she likes mash potato for dinner!

Anne explained the end of year reports –

‘ These reports have a section for the children to comment on nursery, such as – likes and dislikes.’

Family Centre:

Joined onto the Nursery is a Family Centre who cater for children aged 4-10 year olds, the Family Centre has an after school club, unfortunately I was unable to meet any young people who attend the Centre, and it does appear that the Family Centre operates separately to the nursery. Although the emphasis of children’s participation is the same, I would therefore suggest as part of next years evaluation that we do meet children and young people in this setting.

I spoke with Rachel Forest from the family centre, she told me –

‘ We have a breakfast club before school, the children can chose their own breakfast and make it themselves – with assistance if needed, we always give the children options and choices.’

Rachel told me about the wall displays –

‘The children have their own wall to decorate how they wish, the displays also inform parents and carers on what’s been going recently.’

Rachel explained that staff always ask the children what they would like to do.

‘ We would never make the children do anything they wouldn’t want to do.’

Rachel explained the children really enjoy playing hide and seek – it’s their favourite!

The Family Centre runs a wide variety of courses for parents, including – cookery, first aid etc..

The Family Centre also has a playgroup available, catering for 12 children in each session, morning and afternoon.

Shirley explained that all the children have choices.

‘ They can have the sand any colour they would like, children can choose where they would like to sit at snack time etc.. They have the opportunity to pour their own milk as well.’

Sensory Room.

The sensory room is a lovely room for children to relax, having the opportunity to engage with various senses promoting sensory development.

The Family Centre is in the process of developing choices for indoor and outdoor play and extending the outside area. At the moment the children all go out to play, they choose when they would like to come back inside.

Monkchester Road is an excellent Nursery which promotes dialogue and participation at every opportunity, clearly a lot of positive work has been going on, staff are committed to making a difference and making changes for and with the children.

I have no hesitation in recommending Monkchester Road Nursery with Investing in Children Membership.

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