



Re- Evaluation for Investing in Children membership:

The Holland Centre

For the purpose of this membership report, I had the pleasure of meeting with the dyslexia group who were more than happy to welcome me into their Thursday morning session. The group was made up of 5 children from Beechill Primary School, five boys and one girl.

As I entered the room, I was welcomed with lots of “hello’s” and when I sat next to one young man, it was clear that at first he was extremely anxious as to who I was and what I was going to be talking about. He started twitching and fidgeting and Mrs Patterson asked if he would like to swap seats with her however he declined because he said I smelled nice, which I took as a compliment. This is one of the examples of how some of these children struggle in every day situations, like meeting a stranger or not being able to stop fidgeting during a mainstream lesson.

I had the opportunity to join in with the session, while the children talked about whatever they wanted. We started off by doing a game around months of the year and then finished with a game of bingo, using picture cards to improve English skills. A very interesting thing to notice about the children in the group was how relaxed they all were and almost seemed to be at ease. The activities that we were doing were seen more as a game rather than an actual style of learning.

Evidence of dialogue:

Mrs Patterson asked the group if they were happy to share with me who they were and the reasons for meeting. All of the children agreed that they were happy to share some of their experiences. She explained that The Holland Centre is somewhere where the children can come and calm down when they are feeling angry and also somewhere they can use as an incentive to hit their weekly targets of achievement. This means that if the children have had a particular good week, they can have a reward at the end of it, and some may chose to go to the centre to do a creative activity, such as painting.

Mrs Patterson also has the centre open at lunch times so if any of the children need to talk about any problems, they know the door is open to go inside and they will be welcomed with a cup of tea, which seemed a highlight for the children I spoke too.

The children said the following were good about The Holland Centre:

- ✚ “Its fun!”
- ✚ “I love coming”
- ✚ “When I’m angry it’s somewhere I can come and calm down”
- ✚ “People show an interest in you when you are in here”
- ✚ “We can talk about problems”
- ✚ “We get away from the harder work in normal lessons and do things that we understand in here”
- ✚ “We can have a cup of tea and a chat”
- ✚ “Coming here gets you out of literacy”
- ✚ “I love playing the number game!”

They also made the following recommendations:

- ✚ The children don’t like the hanging display from the ceiling – they find it makes the room look too “busy”.
- ✚ They would like the opportunity to do more sessions in the Holland Centre.
- ✚ They would like an anger room where they can take out their frustrations. The room should also have a boxing bag because that is the best way to relieve stress.
- ✚ Paint the walls bright colours/rainbow colours – one young man suggested painting the walls rainbow colours and once that was mentioned, the rest of the children agreed it would be nice to paint the walls a different colour.
- ✚ We also had a number of discussions about what the room had been previously used for and the benefits of knocking down walls but it was agreed that wasn’t an option because of budgets and accessibility.

Another example of how The Holland Centre has helped a child is a young man that found it extremely difficult being in a school setting and it got to the point where he was crying every morning before coming to school. His parents were put into contact with the centre and they decided that every morning he would be able to go in and use the ICT facilities. This overcame a massive barrier because ever since then, he has been fine with coming to school and rarely ever cries.

After the session I had a word with Julie and she was explained the background of The Holland Centre, including how it has helped children with their anxiety problems and also anger management and finally building self esteem. She also said how supportive parents have been of the centre. 3 other schools in the area also have access and use the facilities however these pupils don't mix with the children in mainstream education from Beechill Primary, just the pupils that use the Holland Centre. They even have a separate door for the children and parents from the other schools to use, as this saves embarrassment and awkward questions as to why their children are using the Holland Centre etc. This was something that was requested from both children and their parents.

The Holland Centre is clearly doing a lot of fantastic work and it is obvious that the children using the centre enjoy it and most of all, find that they have dialogue with the staff in the centre. It was obvious from how relaxed the children were and the comments they made about the centre that it was somewhere they felt they could go to get help, and with staff like Julie, who operates an "open door" policy, they know it is somewhere they can go, whenever they need too either for a chat and cup of tea or to get help with their school work.

All of the children involved in this report have agreed the content and recommendations. I would have no hesitation in recommending The Holland Centre for another year of Investing in Children Membership and encourage them to keep up the fantastic work!!

Ashleigh Greathead
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