



Evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Real Care Limited

'Integral to Villa Real School, Real care ltd. is a non profit registered charity which is committed to the development of services for young children and young people of all abilities. We believe that families should be able to access appropriate recreation and leisure activities at quality care at an affordable price. Our services and facilities are second to none, with specialist equipment and fully experienced qualified staff. All of the services are accessible to all children, young people and the wider community.' – **Quote taken from Villa Real – Real Care website.**

Steve Kenna is the force behind Real Care Ltd. Real Care has grown from the commitment of Steve, the school, and the teams providing a service for Children and Young People.

There are three strands to Real Care: -

- Real Care – childcare
- Real training
- Real adventure

Real Care – Childcare

The After School Club runs every evening from 3.30pm-6.00pm. There are junior and senior sessions. Margaret Emmerson is responsible for co-ordinating the sessions, being involved in planning activities including holidays. Margaret also works in the school. I joined in two after school sessions (one Tuesday and one Wednesday).

Evidence of dialogue and change:

Each session starts with tea. The young people who access the after schools childcare through the school **are involved in planning the menus**. Linking this to the curriculum the teachers spend time with the young people to talk about what the young people like to eat, how it can be made and what ingredients are needed. Through this the staff team build the weeks menus around what the children and young people want. On one of my visits the children were tucking into chicken nuggets, potato wedges and beans. Jordan said, **“this is my favourite”**. Michael agreed. Margie told me how they make their own chicken nuggets to make sure they are a healthy option for the children.

After tea is cleared it is activity time. **The children can choose what they want to do**. All areas are open to the group as long as there is enough staff to cover and meet the needs of all children.

Activities available are:-

- Cooking
- Crafts
- Hydro Pool
- Sensory Room
- Soft play
- Outdoor Activities

Outdoor – On one of my visits a group of young people were outside riding bikes and tandems. The young people were having a great time, everyone appeared happy. Jarrad signed for me to take him on a tandem but I declined and he just laughed.

Children and young people at Villa Real have a variety of communication methods, the school use makaton and sign language as well as pictorial representation. However for some children and young people they are reliant on staff to understand their non-verbal communication such as – eye movements, smiling, crying, etc.

The staff team at Villa Real know the children and young people they work with, they take time out to find out the likes and dislikes of each individual child or young person. They know what the children and young people like and what they enjoy and try to ensure that everyone does something that they want to do. The whole environment is a happy one where the staff interact with the children and young people, making tea for them, sharing it with them, helping them to do the things that they want to do.

Hydro pool – also on my first visit three young people with a range of complex needs enjoyed supported swimming sessions. James told me that he loves swimming and he had had his first session in the pool. Tom enjoyed the swaying in the water, being free from his chair and showed no signs of distress only peace. The hydro is also Terry's favourite. Terry is a young man I have also met at Park House. Margie told me that Tom likes music; they have found if they sit him on a wood floor and put the music on near him, he can feel the vibrations and really enjoys this. This very much highlights the commitment of the staff to try new things that the children and young people might like.

After tea on my second visit the group were asked what they wanted to do and a lot of the little ones asked for cooking, Jordan wanted to go straight in the pool, he told me that the hydro is one of his favourites.

Cooking – On my second visit as it was near Easter the children enjoyed making birds nests, a combination of shredded wheat, chocolate and little sweetie eggs. Everyone was included in the making of the nests; children helped each other to be able to join in. I sat with Nicole, Rachel, Callum, and Michael. Nicole helped Rachel to be able to stir the spoon in the gooey mixture, although Rachel wanted to use her hands and did have a good squidge in the bowl once or twice! Louis and Georgia and a few other children made their own on another table.

Soft Play – After the cooking was done I went into the soft play area with Rachel, Nicole, and Callum. All the children enjoyed the safe environment that the soft play area provided. Callum really enjoyed this activity; he was happy active and smiling. Rachel just giggled as balls were juggled and the other children passed them from one end of the room to the other.

All of the above highlights the choice the children and young people have in what they join in and hopefully gives you an insight into the way the sessions run. The children, young people and staff spend a lot of time together and I feel that this reflects the total commitment of the staff. Many of the staff offer respite to parents outside of work, even supporting families by going on holiday with them. All of the staff appear to be prepared to go 'that extra mile' in their support of the children and young people they work with ensuring that their needs are met.

Real Care also offers childcare throughout each holiday. Similar activities are provided each day, as well as much more. Activities that are offered under the heading of Real Adventure. The school and the children benefit from all aspects of Real Care Ltd. They are included in planning where it matters to them, and the whole team work hard to provide an inclusive provision for children and young people in and around Derwentside. Working with other service providers Real Care Ltd is able to work on what I would say is an old fashioned bartering system. For example – Young People from Tantobie Youth Club wanted to do some Outdoor Adventurous Activities. An initial meeting between staff identified both staff teams were keen to develop an inclusive activity programme which would allow for skills to be shared. Funding being an ongoing issue, highlighted a different approach 'to buying' in specialist skills. Real Care provided the adventure activities for Tantobie Youth Club and in return, the children and young people from Villa Real accessed joint craft sessions, based on an Arabian Knights theme. Steve said 'it's a skills exchange.' A very successful one too.

All the work which is done via Real Care Ltd is evaluated by parents, and children and young people. The children and young people do a 'Dear Diary' with their keyworker which also informs the development and changes the service provided. The provision is designed through parental involvement and consultation with the young people. A recent example illustrates the openness of the project and flexible approach to meeting all the needs of those attend. A child who attends the After School provision and holiday activities has Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He attends main stream primary, although his mother found it difficult to access main stream after school and holiday care in the area. Working with the parent, a person centered plan was adapted for the

child to attend. A recent issue developed with the taxi collection from school, as the child became concerned with an unfamiliar face collecting him from school, causing distress and impacting on behavior. Responding to this distressing situation, the project reviewed its collection service from mainstream schools and purchased a vehicle to collect the child using familiar care staff. The parents are encouraged to raise concerns and issues as a positive contribution to improve services and quality, rather than a criticism or complaint.

Real Adventure –

Real Adventure is registered to provide outdoor activities with the Adventure Licensing Authority. Our staff are fully qualified to national standards and have a wealth of experience in enabling all children and young people to participate in a wide selection of challenging adventures.

Activities include:-

- * Corporate Training Events
- * Archery
- * Kayaking/Canoeing
- * Abseiling
- * Coasteering
- * Climbing
- * White Water Rafting
- * Orienteering
- * Expeditions
- * Team Challenges

Taken from the website - <http://www.villareal.durham.sch.uk/realcare.html#> – May 2007
Andy Jacks is the key worker for the activities; Andy has all of the outdoor aspects of adventure covered and is able to provide a wealth of talent for the young people to make use of.

Real Care Training –

Real Training has been established to meet the demands of professionals and parents who require training to support children and young people with disabilities.

As a local provider, we are able to deliver training at your own venue or can take care of all the arrangements on your behalf. We recognise the difficulties associated with training members of staff and therefore adopt a flexible approach to meeting your needs.

Training courses include:-

- * Disability Awareness
- * First Aid
- * Conductive Education
- * Moving and Handling
- * Team Teach (Positive intervention and restraint)

Taken from the website - <http://www.villareal.durham.sch.uk/realcare.html#> – May 2007

All aspects of Real Care Ltd is servicing a role within extended schools provision and that is how Real Care has evolved, out of Steve Kenna's vision for extended schools. There are great plans for the future and I would challenge Steve to ensure that he continues to include the children and young people in the shaping of them. In my evaluation I have hopefully given an insight to what Real Care Ltd is all about, but most importantly for the purposes of Investing in Children I have been able to highlight the dialogue and change that happens on a frequent basis for the children and young people who use the service.

I would like to thank the children and young people for allowing me to be part of their sessions, and Margaret and the staff team for making this happen. I would definitely like to recommend that Real Care Ltd becomes an Investing and children member and happy to do this with the endorsement and backing of the children and young people I met with.

Helen Mulhearn
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