



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Atkinson Road Nursery

Atkinson Road Nursery is a very busy place with all the children involved in an activity. The atmosphere created by staff and children is very welcoming and warm and it was apparent that the children are at the centre of all that occurs within the nursery.

Atkinson Road Nursery believes that all children have different needs, wants, views and opinions. This ethos is at the core of the nurseries day to day operation. The nursery works towards accommodating each individual's needs.

It is evident how familiar and at ease the children were with their routine. This has been highlighted in previous reports. The children move from session to session with confidence and enjoy the choices that the freedom of open play allows. The staff provides opportunities for the children to be able to explore, enjoy and make choices about the way in which the nursery operates.

Since last year's evaluation changes have been made and projects developed as a result of the on-going dialogue between staff and children.

Evidence of dialogue and change is taken from discussions I had with the children during an open play session. I spoke with Lauren, Daniel, Achmed, Maddison, Liam, Martin and Peter.

As the nursery is so over-subscribed it was necessary for the school dinners to be served in two sittings. However the children were telling the teachers that they felt rushed at lunchtime and those who had the second sitting had to sit in a messy area. As a result things have changed. The whole nursery now has lunch together. **"I like it because I don't have to rush my dinner and it is not messy."** The children can now take their time eating their lunch and have the opportunity to start their lunch at clean tables (to begin with). **I like dinner time. I tidy up the toys so we can have our dinner.** (Peter)

Maddison showed me her favourite change with the lunch time, the new cutlery trolley. The nursery was successful in securing a 'food in school grant' which allowed them to buy a new salad bar and also Maddisons cutlery trolley. This has given the children more choice at lunchtime and encourages independence as they can help themselves. It is clear that the children understand their roles within the school and that they need to make their own choices.

I overheard a discussion between Lauren and her teacher. Lauren was new to the nursery and younger than the other children in the nursery. Staff had given Lauren the opportunity to stay in the play area until she felt comfortable with her new environment. **"I think I want to go into one of the class rooms now"** (Lauren). The teacher responded **"Which classroom would you like to go into?"** Laurens request was **"the blue classroom, the same as my jumper."**

Atkinson Road Nursery is based within the heart of Benwell in the west end of Newcastle. Benwell's BME (black, minority and ethnic) population is ever increasing. This has led to an increase in children from a wide range of countries enrolling in the nursery. Nursery practitioners are finding communication difficult in many cases. In order to improve the service they provide to the community the staff team decided to have all school information translated into the language of each particular child.

In addition to ensuring that the children are engaged in continuous dialogue, it is important to the nursery staff that they also include parents in this process. In addition to gathering the views of parents and carers informally the school have begun to provide a written survey at the end of each school year. As a result of this process parents highlighted concerns about the safety of a low level window used by the children to see out into the nursery garden. This was discussed with the children. They were included in the decision of what to do about the window. The result was a resounding NO to blocking the window. A builder was brought in to work alongside, children, parents and staff. To meet the needs and wishes of everyone, it was agreed that a guard rail would be fitted as an extra precaution. The best result for all involved, the parents were happy with the safety implication, whilst the children still had the opportunity to see their garden on wet days.

The staff team expressed an interest in extending the nursery into unused parts of the building. Children and Parents worked alongside an architect called Sam to come up with ideas about the sorts of activities, rooms etc that they would use / require from the building. These ideas together with suggestions from the nursery practitioners were collected and put into a feasibility study. All involved with the nursery are trying to find some money to make the ideas a reality.

All of the children I spoke to in the nursery were happy with the activities that they have and also the changes they have made to the nursery. The children are without a doubt at the centre of decisions made within the nursery, and they are certainly involved in dialogue with both staff and parents. Atkinson Road Nursery has successfully developed a system where by children, parents and nursery practitioner's work together to create the vibrant atmosphere that is Atkinson Road Nursery. Every group of people affected by change is included in the decision making process.

Atkinson Nursery clearly continues to provide opportunities for the children to be included, make choices and have fun. In respect of this continued commitment I fully recommend on behalf of the children that Atkinson Road Nursery continues to be an Investing in Children member.

Kim Kyle
Investing in Children
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