



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Throckley Primary School

Throckley Primary School serves an area on the outskirts of Newcastle. On my visit to the school I met with Mrs Trundle and members of the school council. Mrs Trundle explained that this was a brand new school.

I received a very warm welcome while entering the school and was very impressed with the decoration and technology. A plasma screen was mounted on the wall within the reception area showing the move from the old school to the new one.

As I was waiting to speak to the school council I waited in the reception area, I noticed children were coming and going in and out of the office helping the staff to do photocopying etc.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change.

I had the pleasure of sitting in on one of Throckley Primary's school council meetings; these meetings take place once a month. There are elections every year, when each class democratically votes for a representative.

Abbey had brought along a suggestion box she had made. She explained how her suggestion box would work and where she wanted to place it within the school.

The school council are busy making suggestion boxes. They are going to place them throughout the school to hear other children and young people's views and opinions on their school.

Adam Read some of the suggestions that had been put in his box:

‘ Would like more footballs and more bat and balls. ’

The children and young people had a conversation about this and came to the conclusion that they could use the £50 they have from funding and buy some new equipment.

Ellie explained to me a bit about their school council and how it works:

‘ When you are on the school council we have badges, these explain if you are head girl or a peer mentor, buddies wear caps. ’

Natasha told me about some of the decisions the council had made:

‘ We have designed the outdoor area prints on the yard, we wanted to brighten up the yard. ’

Eco School

The young people were keen to tell me that they are an eco friendly school:

‘ We have recycling bins, litter pickers – on a Monday/Wednesday and Friday’s, we volunteer and take it in turns to pick the rubbish up.’

Throckley Primary School has a silver award due to being an eco friendly school, they are working towards the gold award, and Ellie told me:

‘ Once we get the gold award we will get to fly a green flag on the school to show we are eco friendly.’

Beginning of the new school year.

On change over day, when the children and young people move classes, they meet their new teacher before hand; the teachers ask the children what they would like to see within their classroom.

Natasha told me:

‘ We decide on the class rules, we do a tally chart on what rules we think are best.’

I asked the school council members if they are happy within their school...

‘Yes, very easy to talk to my teacher.’

‘ We can talk to everyone within the school council and have a meeting with the teachers and they will sort it out straight away.’

‘ If we are getting picked on we can go to a teacher or Dave the Dolphin.’

Dave the Dolphin is situated in the school hall. Children and young people can post messages to Dave the Dolphin if they are worried or have a problem. The young people weren't happy with Dave being in the hall as they thought this was not confidential enough. They asked the teachers if he could be moved into the reception area. This has now happened and the children are pleased.

Bubble Time and Buddies.

Bubble time is when the children can spend one on one time with their teacher. Bubble time is an opportunity for the children and young people to express a problem or worry about home or school.

‘ If you need to talk to your teacher you can, you just ask for bubble time, they give you advice on any problems you have, you can see them when you want and as many times as you want.’

Adam told me:

‘ Buddies are helpers, if you see someone who is sad in the playground you go over to them and play with them, cheer them up, we wear buddy caps so people can see us in the yard. ‘

Peer Mentors.

Peer Mentors are available two days of the week for four sessions. They are based in a room where they are not disturbed. Blinds and windows are closed to maintain confidentiality.

Peer mentors have a rota which states which peer mentor is on duty and at what time. The children and young people draw up the rotas between themselves. Each individual young person within the school has a code; this is to ensure everything is confidential.

Peer mentors attend sessions with Ann from the Behaviour Support Team, who offers advice and guidance.

The young people told me how the system works:

“ I give advice to people who are getting bullied or worried about something, they make an appointment and take a ‘Peer Mentor Pass’, which they show to the lunch time staff, this allows them to stay in the building.”

All of the young people told me that they feel this is a really good idea and has been proven to work.

Peer Massage

The young people told me:

“ Peer Massage teaches you how to massage, to cool people down when they are worked up or worried about exams, we don’t have to do it, we have a choice to get involved, some people just wanted to watch.”

“We learn relaxation techniques, I really enjoy it, the peer massage lady comes in once a week and we learn different moves, we are learning the cat grip at the moment.”

“At first I didn’t want to do it, but then I watched and decided I wanted to join in.”

Mrs Trundle explained that the Peer Massage was new to the school and it had only recently been introduced to the children and young people. The young people were asked their thoughts around this and decided how often they would like to do peer massage and whether they wanted to be involved at all.

Year 6 – Own Jobs

The young people in year 6 have their own individual jobs; they told me what jobs they do:

“ We wanted to have our own jobs in school, we choose our own jobs, they are – Office Assistant, Head Teacher Assistant, Playground Assistant – we help the younger children onto the bigger yard, Library Assistant, we create our own rota and decide on who’s doing what.”

“It’s fun, I love it, it gives us responsibility and independence.”

I was then shown around their new school.

Reception area.

The reception area is very spacious with comfy seating and children's toys in the centre. Mrs Trundley mentioned that Ellie and Natasha wanted a dolls house and a pirate ship and these have been ordered. Mrs Trundley is in the process of asking the children what books they would like for the reception area.

On the walls in the reception area there are pictures framed of all of the staff, staff aren't photographed at work but at home doing things they enjoy – cooking, walking etc. The frames aren't in hierarchical formation. Mrs Trundley stated: *'everyone is treated as individuals.'*

Mrs Trundley explained the 'Grand Opening Day' which took place in July. Children lead and organised the event, and showed the adults around their school: *'the children know their school better than anyone else.'*

Each class wanted to perform their own songs within the "Grand Opening Day". This took place.

ICT Equipment

The young people showed me their ICT room, and told me that they had a lot of input in the equipment that was purchased.

Restaurant

The young people had looked at ways of making the hall brighter, Natasha said: *'we chose green light displays and created butterflies.'*

Gym

Colourful hangings that each class has creatively made are displayed on the walls of the gym.

Smarties

As I was walking through the school the young people told me about 'Smarties'. These are mainly displayed in the cloak rooms of each class. The children and young people identify what they are good at choosing from – word smart, nature smart, body smart, self smart etc...

'These are all throughout the school, we can change them when we want and can have as many things on the display we are good at.'

'Can design them how you want, doesn't have to be a smarty, everyone is different.'

Foundation Stage

Mrs Trundley explained the foundation stage had received £200 of funding. The nursery staff found out how the children wanted to spend this money. They prepared a voting system and the children pointed to what they wanted in their outdoor area. They choose a boat and a train.

The Lord Major will be coming to open and christen the outdoor area.

Highscope is promoted within the foundation stage. The children are encouraged to make their own decisions and choices, and this is echoed throughout the whole school.

Mutual respect works both ways within Throckley Primary. Teachers and children respect each other's choices, decisions and wishes.

Year Group Colours

Each year has their own colour, this is so the children can recognise, relate and identify to their own year group, the children and young people have chosen the colours relating to nature.

Year 1 – Yellow
Year 2- Blue
Year 3&4 – Aqua
Year 5&6 – Lavender

Back Yard

The back yard was designed by children and young people. Some of the children wanted some where to sit when they didn't want to run around, and this was arranged.

“ We designed somewhere to sit and some monkey bars, we draw up some plans.”

The children and young people told me the display board near the stairs is getting re-designed and they have decided to choose a wonderland theme.

I asked the children if they are happy within their school and felt that they were listened to, they all shouted **“YES”**

Throckley primary is fantastic, the children really are at the heart of their school, and every decision is made with the children and young people for the children and young people!

The young people are very proud of their new school and enjoyed showing me around, I would like to say a big thank you to the young people and staff for making me feel so welcome!

Therefore I recommend Throckley Primary School receives Investing in Children Membership.

Michelle Fenwick
Investing in Children
December 2007