

# Case Study

## Sherwood Primary School

<b>School name:</b>	<b>Sherwood Primary School</b>
<b>Lancashire school no.</b>	<b>06/041</b>
<b>Contact name:</b>	<b>Dinah Lord</b>
<b>Telephone no.</b>	<b>01772 719093</b>
<b>Award granted:</b>	<b>Innovative Practice Award</b>
<b>Project title:</b>	<b>"Sherwood Primary School Foundation Unit"</b>

### Project summary

Sherwood Primary School Foundation Unit is just about to enter its third year of development. Initially, we decided it would be very advantageous if all the children were to be together for their first year in school. This would have benefits for providing the same curriculum for all and also assist personal and social relationships. It would also give the opportunity, for the staff, to make qualified decisions when dividing the group into two classes. This facility would also enable us to develop the facilities to provide a true Foundation Curriculum. We started with a very large classroom and a cloakroom area which gave us room for development. Now two years later we have: the main classroom, a creative room, a cloakroom, toilets, a conservatory, an outdoor area with soft surface and a developing garden area. We believe that the development of our unit provides the children with a rich, stimulating, exciting and varied environment where they can experience fully all areas of the Foundation Curriculum - thus giving all the children the best possible start to their school life and giving a true foundation to their learning.

### Specific aspect of practice to be accredited?

- Establishing a Foundation Unit which is ideally suited for our children and for them to experience the Foundation Curriculum, with all areas of learning represented in an exciting, interesting and stimulating environment.

### What were the initial success criteria?

- To provide an environment and a staffing ratio which facilitates and enhances all the learning areas of the Foundation Curriculum.
- To amalgamate the two reception classes into one whole year group, thus improving personal and social integration in the school environment.
- To provide the children with an increasingly broad and balanced curriculum which gives them the best possible start to their school life.

## What was the starting point for the practice?

- Initially, before our development, the reception children were allocated into one of two classes prior to them starting school. Although the classes were situated next to each other contact between the children was limited. Staffing was a class teacher, for each class and shared nursery nurse. Because of the facilities and the staffing it was challenging to cover the curriculum, to the extent we felt our children needed to gain the best possible start to their school life.
- We also felt that for social reasons it would be advantageous for the reception children to enter school as a whole group rather than being split into two separate classes.
- The obvious accommodation for such a project was a very large classroom situated where further development could take place.
- Equally if the development took place the whole school would benefit from straight age classes. Prior to this we had large classes and a split age class in the lower juniors.

## What were the significant milestones and actions in its development?

- October 2003 - initial idea of the development of a Foundation Unit, located in a very large classroom, suggested by the Headteacher.
- The decision was made to relocate all the reception children and develop the accommodation and thus the facilities to enhance the curriculum.
- Visits by the Headteacher and Early Years Leader to two other schools which were already operating foundation units.
- Discussion and decisions about staffing the unit - how many staff would we need for the unit to function effectively? Considerations included the number of children and the practicality of the curriculum. This certainly held considerations for funding.
- We moved all furniture, resources and sundries in the last week of term (July '04). Resources were sorted and some reallocated to Year 1. Planning the layout of the main classroom was done to make sure appropriate areas for role play, numeracy, language activities etc. were evident.
- Main room, outdoor area fenced, creative area together with toilets and washing facilities were ready for the new intake of children. (September '04)
- Outdoor grass area resurfaced with rubberised tarmac to provide a level, safe surface. (January '05)
- Purchase of outdoor equipment to enhance the children's skills and their curriculum - tricycles, walkers, scooters, balance walkway, waffle bricks etc.
- An outdoor storage unit was purchased to house the outdoor equipment securely.
- During the summer holiday of 2005, a conservatory was added. This extends our learning area, providing excellent accommodation which is used for a wide variety of activities.
- Discussions about staffing, for the afternoons, to accommodate our increased number of rooms. This increase gave us the same number of staff in the mornings and the afternoons.

- At the present time (Mar '06) a garden area is being fenced ready for future development.

### **Which members of the school and/or wider community have been involved and what was their role?**

- The Headteacher and Early Years Leader involved in the initial discussion, planning and implementation of the development.
- The Senior Management Team was kept advised and discussed the development at all stages.
- The School Adviser provided guidance and support throughout.
- Governors discussed and supported throughout, several making regular, informal visits to see progress.
- Parents have been extremely supportive throughout in all aspects of the development, from both a personal and practical consideration for their children.
- All Foundation staff continually discuss provision.
- All teachers have been released to spend time in the unit to experience the way that we organise the Foundation Curriculum first hand.

### **How has the practice been modified or improved during development?**

- From the very onset of the idea we have given careful thought and discussed different possibilities before further steps have taken place. As budget is always a major consideration it has been essential to plan and execute the development so the greatest benefit has been gained for the monies spent.
- The Unit has developed progressively. This gave time to make sure the next step taken was absolutely correct for both the children and the curriculum facilities. Each step has been carefully discussed, planned and monitored to gain maximum benefit and advantage from all aspects.
- In structural terms, the whole vision is now nearing completion, however, development will continue as long as Sherwood Foundation Unit exists because we will always strive to improve the curriculum, facilities and resources for our children.

### **What has been the impact of the project on pupils' learning, achievement or enjoyment and how has this been measured?**

- Our aim, within the unit, is to offer an environment which supports and provides rich experiences in all six learning areas. We can now plan and execute a curriculum which is supported by the different areas. The different 'rooms' - outside area, main room, the creative area, the conservatory and soon to be garden - assist in this aim, for at any one time during the day there is a full range of activities, covering the different areas of learning, available to the children. Some activities are supported by adults, to enable each child to gain maximum value regardless of their ability or level. Equally a wide range of free activities are always available.
- We have an excellent staff ratio which allows a member of staff in each of our 'rooms' - both inside and outside, thus gaining maximum benefit from their usage. We have appointed our staff very carefully with both the children and the practicality of the curriculum in mind. This has included a bilingual

teaching assistant to help our EAL children to feel valued and secure. We also consider it very important that, all the time the children are in school, there are adults available with whom they can relate and can recognise. Therefore, several of our staff have lunchtime and playtime responsibilities each day.

- The whole year group together must have a real impact on the personal and social relationship throughout the whole of their school life. We encourage positive relationships with great emphasis on enjoying learning together and looking after each other. The true measure of this aspect will be more apparent as the year groups move up the school, although it immediately assists when planning future class occupants.
- With the knowledge gained after all the children have been together for the year, the staff are greatly assisted in making informed decisions about how to divide the group into two equal classes - in all aspects.
- The unit has proved a great success in its first full year. The children, parents and staff certainly enjoyed the whole experience. The children are happy and enjoy coming to school, resulting in an enthusiastic approach to their learning, in all areas of the curriculum.

### **What are the next stages in the development process?**

- To continue the started development of the garden area, planting a variety of fruit, vegetables and flowering plants, in the very near future. This will extend the environmental activities we already carry out.
- To continue to develop the curriculum content, resources and facilities.
- To smooth the children's transition to Year 1, a more practical and investigative curriculum is to be explored, continuing to encourage the enjoyment of learning. Members of the SMT and our infant teachers are visiting schools already operating this type of curriculum to assist in research and planning. We also hope to extend certain aspects of this type of curriculum into Year 2 to further ensure enjoyment of learning.

### **Do you believe this practice could be replicated or developed in other schools? In what ways?**

- Yes. We have had a visit from teachers from another school to assist in their proposed development. A tutor from a local college arranged for a group of approximately ten early years students to visit the unit and discuss our practice.
- This unit has been developed specifically with our school and our children at the centre of the vision, however, it is a very practical and workable system which to date has no disadvantages.

In setting up our Foundation Unit we truly believe that we are providing our children with the best possible start to their school life and giving a true foundation to their life long learning. It has taken thought, time, energy and total commitment by the major players to reach our present stage of development. We firmly believe that, as the Unit further develops, it will prosper and produce happy, stimulated children who have a thirst for knowledge and thus benefit the whole school with their positive attitude and enjoyment of school life.

