

# Allowing children to take the lead

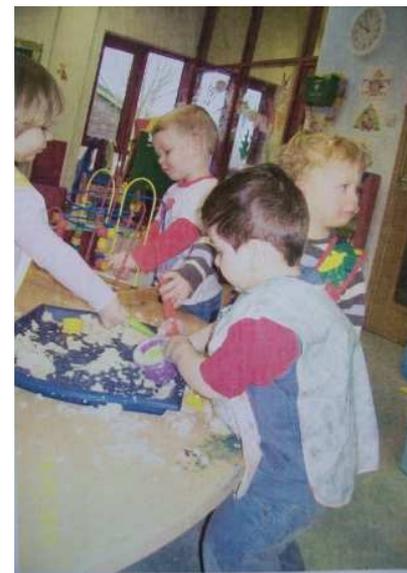
## Case Study 5

### Ashbridge Independent School and Nursery: Jane Crossthwaite

Jane is the nursery teacher at Ashbridge Independent School and Nursery which is set in 10 acres of woodland and meadow. Jane decided that she and her team would focus on developing and further establishing child initiated learning with the younger children.

#### AIMS

- To recognise the importance of child initiated learning (CIL) at the heart of good practice, particularly with the children under 3 years old.
- To establish CIL further with the youngest children and find effective ways of integrating it into practice.
- To encourage/inform staff to plan appropriately using CIL.
- To provide more meaningful learning experiences/outcomes for all our children.



#### INITIAL STEPS

To discover staff understanding, Jane gave staff working with children under 2 years of age a questionnaire which asked what they understood CIL to mean and examples of how they used this in their planning and practice.

They then looked at their current record keeping to see if CIL was supported by planning and assessment systems.

#### HOW THIS WAS DEVELOPED

- The focus was on one class initially.
- They looked at the physical environment and improved the children's access to resources.
- Children under 2 years of age are less able to communicate verbally than older children, so staff were encouraged to observe children for longer periods of time.
- Detailed observations were shared with other members of staff. They discussed the learning that was taking place, how they could develop the interest/learning further and what the next steps were. Further activities were planned, focusing on the next steps that had been identified and detailed observations again taken of any children engaged in the experience. As this continued learning paths/journeys became apparent.



- Talking to parents was crucial. Discussing observations with parents enabled staff to make links between home and nursery and better understand the child.

A display board in the classroom was used to show the development of CIL following an observation. This was used to inform parents and members of staff throughout nursery.

## OUTCOMES

- There was a rise in staff motivation.
- At a staff meeting CIL was discussed and how it could be used effectively throughout nursery as a whole.
- Children much more engaged as enhanced areas of provision developed their interest.
- Planning was developed. Initially, planning was focused around the areas of provision but was changed to focus on the child and the next steps in their learning. This proved much easier for staff to use and reflected more CIL.
- An updated planning format was introduced throughout the whole of nursery.
- Most observations led to a variety of interests for different children. Deciding which to extend proved a challenge - knowledge of the children and a flexible approach was crucial.
- Activities which did not engage the children were adapted to meet their interests and needs.
- Flexibility with resources and time ensured that the needs and interests of the children were developed and the children's leads followed.



## NEXT STEPS

- To continue to monitor and evaluate.
- To share good practice within the setting – develop a good practice file.
- To encourage parental involvement - display boards to be used in each room showing the effectiveness of CIL.

## IMPACT

- Children become involved and engaged much quicker and for longer through learning initiated by themselves.
- Young children's language skills developed more rapidly, as next steps are related to their previous experience and they were able to apply and extend new vocabulary.
- Children were increasingly willing to take risks, exploring and investigating as they built on previous experiences.
- Knowledge of the child and staff skills in observation were crucially important.
- Involving parents directly in children's learning encourages transfer of information and secures good relationships between home and nursery.
- Children with schemes are more easily identified and supported through a focus on CIL.