

# Valuing parents as partners in children's ongoing learning

## Case Study 3

### St. Anne's Catholic primary School Nursery – Sheila Lancaster

Sheila is the nursery class teacher of a maintained primary school. The class of twenty three children attend part time in the morning. Many of their parents are young families.

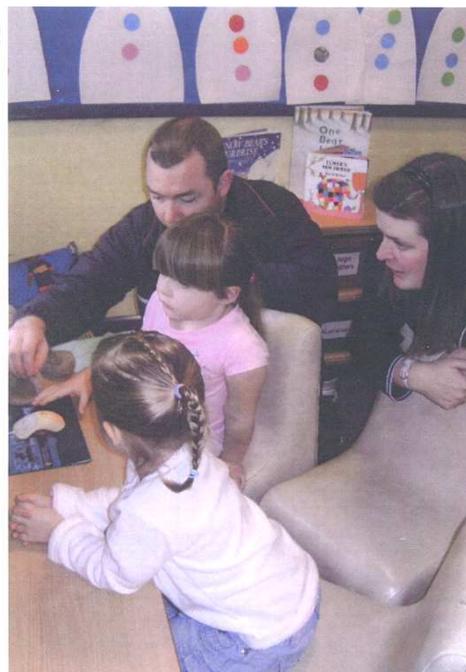
Sheila's actions were a response to one parent's comment "I want my child to enjoy school better than I did".

#### AIM

Sheila wanted parents be become more involved in the life of the nursery and to help them understand the role of their children's play in learning at home and in school. She was keen to build a strong partnership in helping the children flourish. She felt that it was important to establish good relations with the families before and especially during the first year of school life.

#### ACTION

- Prior to starting nursery the children and their families were invited to an 'open afternoon'. This was informal and very 'child led'; parents were encouraged to join in with the painting, playing and exploration;
- A more formal afternoon followed when staff met with parents/carers to discuss the transition between home and nursery;
- Parents were also encouraged to enter their child's learning area to see the educational growth throughout the year. Communication was also made through frequent newsletters and the website;
- Sheila then invited parents to return to the nursery with their children for an afternoon session. She asked the children to show their parents the things they liked doing at the nursery. This session was a rerun of what happens in the morning, the children were in charge and they showed and helped their parents access all the opportunities on offer. In addition to providing an opportunity for parents to become involved in the activities with the children it also gave them ideas for activities at home.



Parents enjoying activities with the children

## IMPACT

Apart from everyone having a wonderful time, the parents came to realise how independently their children were able to choose what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it. They selected the resources they needed, the ways they wanted to use them and moved onto other activities when they were ready to do so. The children felt proud and highly accomplished. Parents became more eager to talk about what they and their children were doing at home.

A second session in the spring was also successful. More families attended this session – Sheila felt the word had spread! Relationships developed between staff, children, parents and families. Parents developed a better shared understanding of the diversity of children's attainment which can be found in lots of every day events. They again responded enthusiastically and joined in all the activities, singing, cutting and sticking and role play etc.



### Parents were more involved with the 'hands on' session

Sheila said

*"We felt that the afternoon gave the chance for adults and children to mix and share the unique experience of nursery life. New ideas were explored with examples of good practice shared between the staff and the parents"*

Sheila is spending more time talking to parents so is using the information to extend the arrangements to support transition into the nursery.

nursery has also a lot more confident. Its a good idea to have the sessions and would be a very positive thing for children, teachers and parents to enjoy the sessions on a regular basis. The activities were fun whilst the

**Comments from the letters which parents wrote after the visits**

I enjoyed the songs because I now know more about what she is singing to me at home!

Open Afternoon at the nursery was an opportunity I was looking forward to. Thomas was excited to show me around 'his' nursery and introduce me to his friends.