

Membership Re-evaluation

Date: May 2017

Project Name: Plant Pots Playgroup & Preschool

Project Location: Great Park Community Centre, Roseden Way, Great Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE13 9BD

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Summary of Evaluation: New Membership



Sector: Early Years

Ages: 2 – 5 years

Area: Great Park

Ward: Castle

Number of beneficiaries



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children Membership Award TM

Plant Pots Playgroup & Preschool



Introduction

Plant Pots Playgroup and Preschool is a recently established early years setting situated in Newcastle's Great Park area. The Great Park is undergoing a redevelopment which will support new homes, schools, nurseries, shops and a purpose built community centre.

Plant Pots is located in the newly built community centre and space has been used to maximum effect. In total there are two play rooms; one for playgroup and one for pre-school children. There is also an extensive outdoor play space which the children have access to and use to their full advantage. The building is new and modern however the staff are faced with the daily challenge that the rooms are used by other members of the community when Plant Pots Playgroup and Preschool aren't open. All equipment and display has to be locked away at the end of each day.

In general the setting provides a warm and welcoming environment for young children. When I made my first visit the children were excited as they were preparing for Christmas. During my second visit I arrived before some of the children whilst other children sat with their parents reading story books in the reception area.

On both visit the staff I met were keen to show me how they listen to children and make changes as result of dialogue

Evidence of Dialogue & Change

The beginning of the day

During my first visit children told me the start of their day was very important. On my second visit I made sure I arrived early. When I arrived some of the children had already arrived and were sitting at the tables in the reception area. Children were selecting books from the community library and together, children and their parents read, soaking up the relaxing atmosphere. This period before the session starts is clearly important to the children as they welcomed each other saying "hello" as more children arrived. Children began to self-register themselves as being in attendance whilst parents signed the registration sheet. Once the doors open the children for

playgroup raced ahead with excitement, **waving** bye and blowing **kisses**.

Playgroup (children aged 2 years – 3 years)

I went into Playgroup first and found the children preparing for circle time. Circle time gives the children chance to share important information and for children to find out plans for the day. After singing their usual greeting to each other I asked to talk to the children. The children nodded so I sat with them on the carpet ready to listen to the stories they wished to share.

All of the children were excited and it was very difficult for me to always record their names however this is what they told me;

“It’s my sister’s birthday today she is known as seven now she used to be six.” All of the children **smiled** in response. It was very clearly that the children spend a lot of time talking about their families, especially sister’s. Another child adding **“My sister has pink shoes and I have a football”**.

I asked the practitioner to follow the normal morning routine and she began to talk to the children about the weather, the day of the week etc. The children were keen to show me their skills and knowledge.

Recommendation: It appeared the children became bored. It may be helpful to consider the welcome more interactive for example wake-up exercises.

I asked the children to have a look at my report and they spotted the picture I have placed on the front page they began to **point** to their self-portrait identifying themselves and their fantastic artwork.

The children were clearly proud of their work and were delighted that it appeared on the report. I asked if they were pleased about that and they shout **“YES”** with big **smiles**.

The practitioners explained to the children that they would be making telescopes. The children **jumped up and cheered** and asked **“Is this our treasure hunt?”** The children said **“will you make the treasure?”** The practitioner said that the treasure hadn’t be made as yet and then asked the children for ideas about treasure.

I asked the children why they were making a telescope **“For our treasure hunt”** they said. Clearly fully aware of how their ideas were being put into action. I asked whose idea it was to have a treasure hunt and they shouted **“Nicola”** (practitioner). The



children explained that the practitioners know what they like to do and help them make their play more exciting **“we like that”**.

The children said that this wasn't just a treasure hunt it was a **“pirate treasure hunt”**. I then asked the children if they all liked pirates. Most of the children **“cheered”**.

I asked the children what they would be doing after circle time. The children told me **“Play, it's the best thing”**.

“We use mind mapping with the children. This means we can talk to the children during circle time and write down exactly what ideas the children have and what activities they would like to do.”



“For example it was icy outside. The children were fascinated by the ice and wanted to know where it came from. As a result they did experiments to try and create ice. In the mind mapping conversations the children talked about Snowmen and what happens when it gets warmer. The children really enjoyed this and it linked really well to Christmas. The children completely lead this piece of work and made the decisions with our help making changes to their everyday understanding of ice and snow.”

The children left the carpet in search of their favourite activity.

Reflection: The children clearly feel confident and empowered within the playgroup and have developed trusting relationships with the adults who care for them. I would ask the practitioners to consider taking more risk by supporting children to lead throughout the development of the children's ideas.

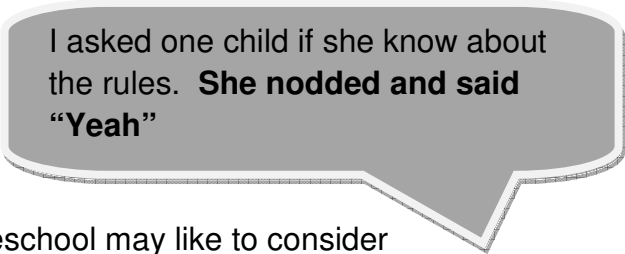
It is important to say, that during my second visit to Playgroup, the atmosphere was more relaxed and the children appeared to be more settled.



On my first visit all of the children were busy when I went into playgroup. I observed the children selecting their drinks and snacks. The children were taking their responsibility to self-register their options very seriously and were supporting each other to pick snack and find their own drinking cups.

Keeping Safe

I noticed that playgroup had class rules and I was keen to find out who had written the rules for the group.



I asked one child if she know about the rules. **She nodded and said “Yeah”**

Recommendation: Plant Pots Playgroup and Preschool may like to consider the aim of the group rules. The children could play an active role in creating a display for the rules which could highlight the consequences if rules are broken.

What children like to do?

After the children left the carpet the room filled very quickly with princesses and construction workers as the children began to create their imaginary world. One little girl took lots of photographs of me making funny faces **“again, again”** she shouted.

The strength of the relationship between children and adults has developed greatly since my first visit, and I welcomed the fantastic interactions as everyone got involved with play and learning. The staff have listened to children and enabled children to maximise their imaginary play by providing resources that children need to explore the world around them.

Children confidently asked practitioners for help when necessary. Children always responding with beaming **smiles** and **nods** of thanks.

Singing

Children in playgroup love stories and love to sing. There is a song of the week which the children select from a list of favourites. For many of the children in playgroup this maybe their first experience of a childcare setting and need support to feel safe and secure. Small steps are taken to empower the children to make decisions however there are times when something new is introduced and more support is given.

Recommendation: Introducing a song bag may help the children to select songs. Children should help create the bag using simply toys or objects around the room which help them remember a song. Children can then take turns to select an object from the song bag. This acts a good prompt for children and reduces any pressures of ‘being put on the spot’.

Recommendation: Playgroup may like to consider what kind of listening environment they would like to create. Children need to time to reflect and think about the choices that they are making. Creating an enabling environment supports young children to establish an atmosphere where they feel respected and valued. Children will express

themselves and the role adult's play within this is to give full attention to the communication and make meaning about what children are saying.

I was very excited and ready to move into Pre-school



Pre-school Room

Pre-school room felt very different. It was very busy with children cutting out and making things, some children were playing on soft play and others were playing quietly with toys. It was a lovely room and I really enjoyed talking to everyone in there.

Space is well used although limited. I asked how the children could make decisions about toys or activities they would like to do. The staff team showed me an example of a catalogue style book. The children can select toys from the book. I observed the children using the book and they are clearly a resource the children value.

Recommendation: More work should be considered on the book. It could be smaller and easier for the children to handle. The book could also contain examples of how particular piece of equipment could be used to support children's imaginative play.

The space in the room had just undergone a move around. The worker explained that many of the children in pre-school had just moved up from playgroup.

“In September we wanted to make the room as welcoming as possible for the new children coming in. During the settling period we observed what the children were interested in and we noted they loved tents. We have rearranged the equipment in the room so that there is more quiet ‘tent like’ spaces. We’ve added more soft play equipment as the children loved to climb and balance. We are making changes and adding things all the time based on what the children tell us.”

Again the staff team have worked hard in this room to build trusting relationships with the children. These relationships have empowered children to make decisions and changes to the layout of the room and the activities that are available.

Recommendation: Preschool may like to consider developing a listening to children portfolio which would support Ofsted and the Investing in Children Membership Award™ evaluations.

What Happened?	What did they do?	What Changed?
<p>Children in Pre-school spent time looking out of the windows watching the workmen as they created new roads and pavements.</p>	<p>Children and practitioners talked about what was happening outside. Children told the staff team that they wanted to create a construction site inside their play room.</p>	<p>Practitioners made sure the resources needed for a construction site were available to the children. Using toy cones, trucks, hard hats and high vis jackets the children created their own building site.</p>
<p>The children have asked for the cones to be moved outside so that they can extend their play further. Practitioners have agreed and children were deciding where the cones should go.</p>	<p>The children loved the cones and have created an obstacle course, using them for counting, drive (push) toy cars around them and build tents.</p>	<p>Children enjoyed the opportunity to play and broaden their imagination. Practitioners spoke to the workmen and they agreed to provide full size building cones.</p>

Reflection: This example demonstrated a clear understand of children’s wishes and aspiration, I feel practitioners in Preschool could develop this approach to other areas on the children’s learning and play. I would like to recommend practitioners embed the principles of listening “active engagement and involvement within different environments” (Lancaster, 2003) to build on their existing good practice.

Play outside

The children told me they enjoy playing outside. The practitioner asked the children if they wanted to go outside “**Yes**” they shouted. Children went for their coats “**I can’t find my hat**” and “**where is my coat**”. Practitioners and children worked together to get everyone ready for their outside adventure.

Once outside the children raced off to find the area they wanted to explore. Equipment had been strategically placed to support the children to expand their play and learning. Some of the children said “**we are playing houses**”. They acted out their story each child playing an important role. The children laughed and danced about mimicking the roles adults play in the home.

It's time to sing

Back inside some of the children asked if they could '**sing**'. They stood together on their carpet and began to dance and sing. The children were having so much fun joining in or moving away when they had had enough. Obviously I joined in and had a marvelous time "**head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes**", I tried my best but sadly I wasn't as good at the actions as the children.

Conclusion

During my visit the Plant Potts Playgroup & Preschool I made suggestions to the staff team about how they can make changes to practice that would support them to embed a deeper understanding of listening. As a new setting that is finding its feet Plant Potts Playgroup & Preschool provides excellent opportunities based on the interests of the children it supports.

Recommendation: I would recommend Plant Potts Playgroup & Preschool develops a listening to young children strategy that includes opportunities for the staff team to reflect on their listening to children practice.

Based on the comments (drawn from observations) and recommendations from the children who contributed to this report, I am pleased to recommend that Plant Potts Playgroup & Preschool gain its first Investing in Children Membership Award TM.

Louise Cameron
Communities Officer
On behalf of Investing in Children Newcastle
May 2017