

Gloucestershire: Lydney Early Years Centre

Rationale:

Your context and reasoning

What did you focus upon in your setting?

Why did you choose this area?

Lydney Early Years Centre is situated in the grounds of Lydney Church of England Community School. The Centre manager and teacher is also the Early Years coordinator for the school. In June 2004 the Centre began to use the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, aiming to build upon staff commitment to work in more child-centred ways. The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education offered an extension to the good practice already operating. Having identified strategies and elements of good practice, it draws them together to encourage children's creativity and independence.

Focus:

Moving the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education into the Reception year. Adopting this would create a more successful transition, enabling children to make a positive contribution to their own learning. It would further promote parents' involvement with their children's learning and improve the quality of children's learning and teaching.

Reasons:

The approach was already working well in the Early Years Centre and we needed to further children's involvement and parents' interest throughout the whole Foundation Stage.

Process:

Your journey or story

What did you do, for example, team discussion, training, curriculum development?

Record your reflections – what were your emerging questions?

What are the 'ah, buts' and how did you overcome them?

Why did you choose this area?

We used a mix of procedures:

- Main Foundation Stage staff attended Reggio Emilia courses to familiarise themselves with the philosophy and child-initiated approach.
- All Foundation Stage staff attended a training day where the main focus was observing children and child involvement (from the Effective Early Learning (EEL) project). This was aimed at supporting all staff to participate in making observations.
- Paperwork throughout the Foundation Stage was made consistent.
- Discussions took place regarding documenting children's learning through a *Learning Stories* approach. We altered the format of this approach to include all areas of learning.
- Teaching staff in the Foundation Stage visited schools in other countries to observe different teaching styles. The teacher from Nursery had been to Denmark and the Reception class teacher to New Zealand. Both trips gave greater insight into child-initiated teaching approaches.
- Teaching assistants experienced existing Reggio Emilia practice in Nursery through supply work.

Practice:

Examples of emerging practices

What practice has started to emerge in your setting as a result of Sustaining Success?

What is the impact so far on practitioners?

What has been the impact on children's learning?

What is the impact on parents and carers?

Positive areas:

- Practitioners are more aware of children's learning; children's Foundation Stage profiles are more accurate, evidence-based and useful.
- Planning is more purposeful.
- Children are more involved in their own learning and its evaluation.
- Transition throughout the Foundation Stage is less of a leap and is more consistent.

Challenging areas:

- The lack of structure for children who subsequently have to make a transition to Key Stage 1.
- Time to cover all areas of the curriculum.

Possibilities:

Where next?

What are the possibilities for further exploration of practice?

How will you extend and share your learning with others, for example, other settings?

- Parents need to become more involved with their children's learning, not just through parents' evening but in a night about the Reggio Emilia approach, where they can discuss children's home interests and see if they relate to observations made in school.
- Child-initiated play needs to be taking place all day, not just in the afternoon. It should not be seen as a separate entity but can occur alongside structured, adult-initiated activities.
- The school timetable needs to be considered, with thought being given to how best to organise 30 children. Some children could continue with their own learning journeys while others are involved elsewhere.
- Worries about Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests: when analysing this year's results, all Key Stage 1 and Foundation Stage team members need to be involved and ensure that appropriate aspects are covered in the Foundation Stage.
- The Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 are participating in the Effective Early Learning quality assurance scheme from September 2006, which should ensure greater continuity throughout.
- All school teachers and coordinators need to be informed of the Early Years child-initiated curriculum and use of learning stories, so there are no inappropriate expectations. The future could also see learning journeys continuing into Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Contacts and visits are to be made with other Foundation Stage settings that follow a similar ethos.