

## Leeds: Seacroft Children's Centre

### Rationale:

#### Your context and reasoning

*What did you focus upon in your setting?*

*Why did you choose this area?*

Seacroft is a 60-place nursery for children aged from three months to rising five years. The nursery has provided integrated education and care for several years and has been inclusive for children with special needs since 2003. The nursery aims to provide a flexible service that responds to individual needs.

### Focus:

- Developing the wider learning community to include carers, other educational establishments in the area, and other services.
- Developing shared leadership within the centre.

### Reasons:

We have spent time developing our team's expertise in care and education of the children in our nursery. This involved us in developing as a special inclusive learning centre. Having achieved a good level of competence within a strong team, we felt the time was right to look beyond. We want to be more in touch with parents and develop strong working links. We also want to consult with parents and provide them with opportunities to give us constructive feedback about our services. We hope to do this alongside our two partner centres within a local network.

### 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 held a team meeting to give feedback and discuss the issues arising from the identified areas of development.
- In January, letters were sent out to educational establishments in our local area, inviting Early Years practitioners to meet and share expertise, strengthen transition arrangements and develop a support network. We followed this up with telephone calls; one third of those contacted met for the first time in early April.

- Letters were sent out to other public-service providers, with the intention of meeting to strengthen our working relationships and develop a strong shared vision of what we are trying to achieve under the Every Child Matters agenda.
- One staff member attended training at the Pen Green Centre, in Corby, Northamptonshire, on Parents' involvement in their children's learning. Seacroft is now running a pilot programme. The aim is to achieve accredited status and then to extend that training to other centres in Leeds.
- Three staff have been redeployed to work with the family worker, to strengthen and diversify our community involvement. Although this has allowed family work to develop, it has had a knock-on effect as it has been challenging for the teams who work directly with the children. In the short term, we have been able to manage this through managers working directly with children and thus supporting staff. We have learned how difficult it can be for staff to meet to develop new initiatives, conduct routine meetings or find non-contact time for recording and assessing. We are now looking deeply into this aspect in order to find sustainable, long-term solutions.

## 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?*

- In the Foundation Stage, where we are piloting the Parents' involvement in their children's learning programme, we have been making narrative observations of children, on a rotational basis, as well as observing and recording children's achievements as we normally do. This has given us more detailed information and a clearer insight as to how individuals are spending their time, where their focus is and how we can use that interest in developing their learning. We believe that this will heighten children's levels of well-being and involvement.
- Staff discuss their observations whenever possible; at the end of each week the key workers collect the narrative observations about their children and use them to inform their planning. The key workers work in pairs and then report back to the full team. This has given each staff member more responsibility for planning and development and is improving their ability to analyse what they see.
- In the Foundation Stage we have developed clearly defined group areas; parents bring their children to find their names for self-registration, children have their own boxes, clearly labelled, for their possessions and work, which they can access themselves; parents collect their children from the same areas at the end of the session. This is intended to establish a strong group identity and strengthen the relationships between key workers and parents. It was found that, although we knew the parents, some of the parents did not know our names, because the staff team is a large one with different people on different shifts.

- Having additional staff working to develop family involvement has strengthened the parents' use of the Stay and play sessions. These can be booked and attended by families whose children do not yet have places in nursery. Designating staff to support these sessions has enabled high-quality relationships to be formed; the parents begin to understand the centre and how we work; they get to know staff and this benefits their children when they take up their nursery places, as separation is less distressing for the children. The staff involved in this project have benefited from increased motivation and have a degree of leadership, enabling them to develop a clear focus and direction.
- These processes have also developed and strengthened the use of our toy and book libraries, our fruit and vegetable shop and the sale of safety equipment.

## **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?*

- To extend the narrative observation to involve all age groups from birth to five.
- To develop a parent group to discuss observations of children at home and at nursery, using photos and video evidence and thereby strengthening parents' understanding of how their children learn and parents' involvement in that process.
- More joint working with public services, to include drop-in sessions with police and health services.
- Conference to stimulate interest in developing Parents' involvement in their children's learning.
- City-wide training and support in developing Parents' involvement in their children's learning.
- More parental involvement at all levels, with parents having a stronger voice.