



Churchtown Chatter

Imagine... Believe... Achieve



EARLY YEARS QUALITY MARK

NOVEMBER 2016



"It needs to be stated at the outset that classroom visits, scrutiny of written documentation and interviews with professionals including parents revealed high quality processes and practices in all 10 elements of the quality mark. My visit evidenced exceptionally strong team working and leadership at all levels. This was a very satisfying assessment visit and a privilege to observe the interaction of highly motivated children and adults."

"I would suggest that this Foundation Stage provision is special because everyone ensures that children are relaxed, happy and learning."

(Anne Bentley - Approved Quality Mark Assessor for Sefton)



On 2nd November 2016 the Early Years Team were assessed for the Early Years Quality Mark and achieved it with flying colours!! Anne Bentley, the assessor, spent the morning in Nursery and Reception looking at our practice. Below is the report we received following the visit:

Mrs Payne and Mrs Taylor share a vision for their school that is very visible and was articulated by them and their Foundation Stage practitioners. In particular, learning was discussed with me, the importance of children being offered breadth and balance in the curriculum, the value placed on high standards in the Foundation Stage, and the school's overarching aim of ensuring that children enjoyed their childhood.

Whole school strategic planning continues to include the Foundation Stage whilst a separate action plan contains those priorities specific to the Foundation Stage. I was delighted to evidence examples of Early Years Foundation Stage policies and practices informing whole school developments, for example the whole school learning and teaching policy. The Early Years Quality Mark renewal process has been exceedingly well led and managed by the new Foundation Stage (FS) Manager, and she has been well supported by her team.

The Chair of Governors has changed since the initial assessment. My meeting with her confirmed a very clear understanding of the monitoring, evaluating and challenging role – although she impressed upon me how Churchtown's senior leaders presented a thorough analysis of the data, were knowledgeable and reflective, and that this led to insightful improvement planning. I learned how new Governors had brought different skills and interrogation strategies to the leadership team. It was noteworthy that her role as a University Governor further strengthened the partnership working between the school and Edge Hill.

Setting appropriately high expectations was another very clear strength. Observations of adult directed and adult focused teaching revealed that expectations were clearly explained and understood, routines were well established, and children felt safe to experiment and to 'have a go'. Progression was evident between the Foundation Stage age groups. One example was the more extended transfer of attachment relationships in nursery whilst parents of reception aged children separated from their children at the classroom door.



Planning was thorough, reflective and dynamic. It was appropriate to age and stage of development, and was skilfully matched to prior learning and interests. Children were trained to use areas and resources effectively, and this was evident in their behaviour. Mathematics has been a whole school improvement priority and I noted an improved pedagogical understanding that was applied in the planning process also. The planning format ensured that lesson objectives and learning outcomes were explicit, that consolidating and practicing new learning was planned, and that abstract thinking was scaffolded.

Assessment and tracking processes are robust, and there has been an upward trend in children's achievements and a narrowing of the gender gap. The use of 'Magic Moments', as well as regular dialogue, ensured that parents remain key assessment partners, also. I judged that all practitioners knew their children well. Timetabling adults to the outdoor area with their own children had been a positive change. I learned that classroom teams discussed children daily, and more formally each week, with prior learning in mathematics being assessed on a Friday so that there was precision in the planning. The FS manager joined her team each week and judgements were moderated and planning discussed. I was pleased that TAs were included with teachers in this process. Data was analysed and used to inform planning – including creating intervention groups, and targeting boys and children in receipt of pupil premium funding. I observed adult directed teaching in both year groups and was impressed with all practitioners skilfully checking the understanding of individual children through differentiated questioning and clarifying teaching points as appropriate. I noted that practitioners had improved subject knowledge of literacy and mathematics and I judged they were more skilled in recognising significant learning.

Both headteachers have a clear role in challenging progress and formalising this through performance management. Children failing to make appropriate progress were quickly identified, and appropriate SEN professionals involved. The SENCo is now a member of the leadership team and an interview with a parent revealed comprehensive review and target setting processes.

The teaching of mathematics has been a whole school training initiative – training being led by a mathematical specialist from outside the LA, and funding allowing personalised coaching for all teachers. Talk for Writing has been another whole school training initiative. This has resulted in the FS team gaining improved knowledge of speaking and listening, better understanding of the links to writing, and increased teacher confidence. Additional high quality texts have been researched and purchased. The FS team learn with and from each other, regardless of status. They were supportive of each other and respected intellectual ownership. Element 6 shows exemplary practice.

There is a balanced use of child initiated and adult led activities, evidenced by very high levels of involvement throughout the morning. I noted exceptional use of adult focused activities designed for children to practice and apply their learning e.g. dramatic storytelling of 'Room on a Broom' leading to a re-enactment of the narrative outdoors, and spells being created in the outdoor kitchen. I judged that there was a skilled working knowledge of the prime areas of learning by all practitioners.

The physical environment has been transformed since the initial EYQM assessment. The indoor environment is now highly attractive, has a more 'domestic' feel, is calm, stimulating, and promotes children's autonomy. The outdoor environment has also been rethought. Areas and storage methods have been redefined, and planning has been improved. The emotional environment was exemplary, adults secured eye contact, they were 'smiley', and offered reassurance e.g. 'That's alright. Don't worry'. They supported learning skilfully e.g. by supplementing the verbal instruction with a strong visual model in nursery and by encouraging persistence in reception e.g. 'Good try. That was tricky. I'm proud of you'. Throughout the morning children were listened to, enjoyed by all adults, and there was shared pride when children achieved. Adults intervened with humour – accurately gaging children's developmental stage. I would suggest that this FS provision is special because everyone ensures that children are relaxed, happy and learning. Behaviour was exemplary and I noted all adults noting and commenting on positive behaviours.

Finally, there continues to be exemplary practice in partnership working. Churchtown remains an inclusive school and it continues to understand the centrality of parental partnerships in order to maximise progress. The practice of buddying is now embedded. Exemplary practice includes teachers from different age groups working together, younger children learning IT skills from their older buddy, older children joining their buddy to celebrate achievements with tea and toast, and older children acting as models to scaffold play. The preschool parent and child group has also evolved and offers greater continuity with the school's nursery provision in planning, continuous provision, adult led learning, and in reporting via the school's newsletter. The school climate encourages parents, workshops help parents to bridge home and school learning and as one parent told me, 'I can't fault them. They really do believe that children are unique. I never feel that I'm not welcome'.

