

New Beginnings

*Supporting Innovation and Inclusion
in Early Years settings*



Warwickshire
County Council

*Working for
Warwickshire*

Foreword

The early years of a child's life are the most significant in terms of the impact they can have on their future and their ability to make the most of learning throughout their lives. Research shows that access to good quality early childhood education benefits most, those children who may find it more difficult to attend. We are clear that we should ensure that as many children as possible should have access to the very best which we can provide by working with families and a variety of provision in Warwickshire.

It is, therefore, with great pleasure that I recommend this booklet to you.

For some time a group of us had wanted to visit New Zealand to explore the impact of their world class Early Childhood curriculum, expressed in the document - Te Whaariki. We wanted to look beyond national boundaries and bring a global dimension to provision in Warwickshire schools and children's centres.

Although our visit to Auckland and Wellington was short, we were made extremely welcome by the Ministry of Education

and were enabled to explore many different aspects of life for children and in particular, education and family support.

We were intent on disseminating the knowledge acquired on the visit and developing models of good practice: to support practitioners, particularly those in integrated settings, in evaluating and developing their own practice. I am grateful to Zoe Harwood, who is the Strategic Manager for the IDS 0-5 Service, for drafting the document with her usual energy and enthusiasm.

We were all struck by the innovative approaches, which the settings we visited, had adopted. The programme, written up in the booklet, 'Catching the Waves', caught our imagination and was particularly impressive in terms of outcomes for children. We are therefore very grateful for the opportunity to acknowledge what we learnt from New Zealand, as well as continue to develop our own good practice and to share it more widely within Warwickshire.

I hope you will find the booklet helps lead you to an inspirational and enjoyable journey.



Elizabeth Featherstone

Head of Service

Family and Community Division

Contents

Introduction	5
Attention!	6
Let’s Begin...	8
Sand and More Sand	10
Using Activity Sacks to Develop Language Skills	12
Good Looking, Good Listening and Good Sitting	14
Picture That!	16
Stress Management and Wellbeing for Parents	19
Infant Massage	20
Home Visiting	22
Stay and Play at Exhall Assessment Nursery	23
Information Books	24
Getting Better all the Time	26
Using Storyboards for an Inclusive Story Time	28
A Relaxing Christmas Party!?	30
Supporting and Working with Parents/Carers in Parenting Programmes	32
Learning Circles	33
Using Symbols to Promote Good Behaviour	36
NAS EarlyBird Programme	37
Sound Box	38

Introduction

In June 06 I was very fortunate to participate in an Early Years visit, from Warwickshire to Auckland and Wellington in New Zealand. This visit was organised by the Best Practice Network (DfES Teachers’ International Professional Development Programme). At the time, in my role as Strategic Manager and Specialist Teacher for children aged 0-5 with Special Educational Needs, I was particularly interested in looking at innovative and inclusive practice within New Zealand’s early years and childcare settings.

One of the most exciting parts of the visit was an introduction to New Zealand’s “Catching the Waves” initiative. This is where ‘Centres of Innovation’ are selected from early childhood education providers across New Zealand, as part of the New Zealand Government’s 10-year plan for early childhood education policy: Pathways to the Future/Nga Huarahi Arataki (Ministry of Education, 2002). Within the “Catching the Waves” publication, it states that,

- ‘Centres of Innovation are to:**
1. build the use of innovative approaches that result in improved early childhood learning and teaching based on Te Whāriki * (Ministry of Education, 1996);
 2. facilitate action research, with the help of researchers, to show the results the innovative approaches have on learning and teaching; and
 3. share the knowledge, understanding, and models of practice with others in the early childhood education sector and parents/whānau’ (“Catching the Waves”, NZCER 2005, p.2).’

* Te Whāriki is New Zealand’s Early Childhood Curriculum, introduced in 1996.

Following the New Zealand visit, it was decided to use “Catching the Waves” as an inspirational theme for Warwickshire’s IDS 0-5 Teaching and Learning Service (previously known as the DISCS Pre-School Team). Entitled, “New Beginnings”, this booklet aims to promote creative joint-working and professional development opportunities; capturing innovative inclusive practice in a range of early years’ settings and homes across Warwickshire.

We would like to thank the Ministry of Education, New Zealand, for sharing some of their inspirational early years’ policy and practice with Warwickshire. Thanks also extend to Jane Ewens (Team Leader, Early Childhood Education Curriculum), who sought consent on our behalf, to the use of “Catching the Waves” quotes and images, which are referenced in the “New Beginnings” publication.

On a personal note, I would particularly like to thank:

- Warwickshire Local Authority for supporting (and funding) “New Beginnings”, through the Transformation Fund
- The IDS 0-5 team for working so hard with their ideas and subsequent submissions
- All the participating staff in early years settings, children and families

“New Beginnings” provides a snap-shot, or an illustrative insight, into some of the excellent inclusive practice that is taking place across Warwickshire. We hope that you enjoy reading our booklet and are inspired by some of the ideas and achievements.

Zoe Harwood
Strategic Manager for the IDS 0-5 Service

Attention!

Theme:

Developing Attention and Listening skills in Pre-School Children

Based on Philosophy / ideas:

As Area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators we work with a range of children with a wide spectrum of needs. These needs can vary from medical needs which are impinging on their educational success, to behaviour or speech and language difficulties, in fact the list is endless.

One particular difficulty, consistently brought to our attention from many of our practitioners in nurseries and pre-schools was the difficulty that children, in general, have with attention/listening and concentrating skills.

With this in mind Sue and I decided to pull together tried and tested strategies for supporting this area of children's development for a county wide course for early years practitioners.



Aims and Quotes:

Our aim was to get attention and listening strategies over to a wider audience, for use with all the children in their settings. When we began to research the subject we found that many prominent early years educators and medical people had carried out research into this field,



both here and in the USA. We found some of the statistics to be quite alarming:

'Perhaps the increase in prevalence of hyperactivity might be explained by sustained exposure to an unsupervised IT environment where only short attention spans were ever needed, and where the child had no way of practising long periods of paying attention'
Baroness Greenfield, May 2006

'One major side effect of the technological revolution has been, for many children, the replacement of age-old play activities (running, climbing, pretending, making, sharing) with solitary, sedentary screen-based lifestyle. This is an alarming development. TV and computer games have many merits, and our lives would be much poorer without them, but they aren't a substitute for real life and if children are to develop healthily in mind and body, neither are they a substitute for real play.'

Sue Palmer
Toxic Childhood. 2006

Activity initiated and resources:

Developing and running Attention and Listening Courses throughout the county.

Over a period of several months:

- We researched the subject and found references to bring to the attention of the practitioners
- We collated resources, some commercially produced,

and others we made ourselves. The resources were used to model and demonstrate activities that would help to develop attention and listening skills in young children

- We looked at the different stages of attention development and how practitioners might support children at each stage
- We purchased materials for practitioners to make their own games and a laminator to extend the life of the materials
- We collated a small library of interesting books / articles / web sites for practitioners to browse through during their coffee break
- We produced a pocket sized book with ideas for practitioners to use in their setting

Five courses were held throughout the county. Feedback comments from the courses were very positive e.g.

'An excellent session, the trainers had thought of everything. Lots of practical resources to view (and time to make some)'

'It was really nice to see examples of lots of attention/ listening games. It was great to have some time to make games, as I don't have the time or opportunity whilst at work!'



The responses did highlight the benefit of incorporating a practical session, giving time for staff to make their own games which could be used back at their setting and shared with other staff. Also staff enjoyed working their way around the large selection of resources on display all associated with developing attention, listening and concentration skills.

We were able to follow up by speaking to staff who had attended our course during our Area SENCO visits to settings. Julia Wright, Special needs coordinator at Links Daycare Nursery followed up the course by making her own resources and using them for small group activities on a regular basis. Claire Rainford, who is a special needs assistant at Happy Tykes Pre-School, found that the resources; 'supported the children's development of these key skills which need to be learnt and practised on a regular basis.'

At the end of the courses we reflected on the things that went well e.g. staff were interested in the research aspect of this subject and reported on 'new learning' for themselves. The most popular games included an old favourite like 'Kim's game' given a new angle "Magic cloth, magic cloth...", and new ones like a shopping game to improve auditory memory using a miniature metal shopping trolley with fruit and giant lotto cards using children's favourite TV characters.

The things that did not go so well; finding enough room in our cars to transport all the resources and spending an hour setting up the training rooms before the practitioners arrived. However we felt it was all worth while in the end, we are certain that the sale of laminators have gone up in the County!!

A development for the future includes producing activity bags to include attention and listening games for early learners in the North of the County.

Anne Hallissey and Sue Lowe
Area SENCOs

Let's Begin...

Theme:

Small group work that enables children to interact with other children with the support of an adult either non verbally or using one word utterances through simple turn taking and sharing activities.

Based on Philosophy/idea:

Using the new "Early Years Foundation stage" documentation as guidance for work with all children in Pre- School settings there are "6 areas of Learning and development that help professionals observe, plan and assess activities they use based on the children's individual development and needs." (p23)

For this specific teaching activity the statement below in the Personal, Social and Emotional Development area of learning is particularly poignant. It states that in order for settings to effectively implement learning and development in this area they need to:

"Give support and a structured approach to vulnerable children and those with particular behavioural or communication difficulties to help them achieve successful personal, social and emotional development" (Practice Guidance for the Early years Foundation Stage p23.)

If we then look at the Early Learning Goals there are various ones which support the aims and learning involved in my small group work. These are detailed below.

Early Learning Goals:

Children should

PSED

- Be confident to try new activities, initiate ideas and speak in a familiar group.
- Maintain attention, concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate.
- Form good relationships with adults and peers.

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Interact with others, negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversation.
- Enjoy listening to and using spoken and written language and readily turn to it in their play and learning

KUW

- Investigate objects and materials by using all of their senses as appropriate
- Find out about, and identify, some features of living things, objects and events they observe.

Aims /Objectives:

1. For children to join in a small group activity for 5-15 minutes.4/5 children and 2 adults.
2. For all children to interact with at least 1 other child or adult non verbally in the session through passing an item /giving an item to them, gestures , eye contact.
3. Children to join in simple turn taking and sharing activities.
4. For all children to use a minimum of one word sentences once, in the session.
5. To follow simple instructions in the activity.

Extended objectives for those children who are able;

1. To follow complex instructions.
2. To use 2 words or more sentences.

Setting Description:

Two settings I have worked with in a variety of ways in the last three years agreed to take part in these group sessions. They were Bishops Tachbrook Pre- School and Little Stars Christian Playgroup. Both settings were interested in developing their group work to meet the needs of individuals and were happy with the idea of showing their practice to other settings once they had completed the sessions with me. It was arranged that I would organise and bring the activities based on my principles and their individual children's needs and class topics .I would then model the session once each week with the same group of children and a member of their staff would support and observe me. This member of staff would then repeat this with other groups throughout the week so each child in the setting had a turn and the children with additional needs repeated the session at least once. Written lesson plan and evaluations were written for each session.

Activities:

Activities were always presented in the same format

as detailed below. Item 5 was the one which changed each week according to the topic and evaluation of the previous weeks work. They included items relating to mini beasts, toys, Easter, Ice, Chinese New year, Christmas, healthy eating etc.

After/3/4 sessions music was incorporated so that children passed the bag/ box around but only took items out of it bag when the music stopped- like in the game pass the parcel.

Children sat in a semi circle with me in the middle to enable all children to see me with the other member of staff opposite - to help facilitate and observe the activity. This was always in a quiet location eg.corner of the room, another room.

1. Cue cards of Good walking, Group time to show children to prepare them for group time.
2. Hello Song –children to give thumbs up sign or say hello.
3. Cue Cards –Good sitting, looking, listening to remind /show rules.
4. Day's activities in a sack.
5. To take items out of a bag one at a time, pass on to child next to them, name item or answer questions about it.
6. Harry the Hedgehog who is shy and curled in a ball listening and if they join in will let them tickle his tummy at the end.
7. Goodbye song - children to wave or say bye.

Resources:

1. Cue cards as stated.
2. 7 cushions/mats.
3. Sack
4. Hedgehog puppet.
5. Box/ small bag
6. Items for the box/small bag e.g. for the mini beasts topic there was – bee, frog, caterpillar, bird, and butterfly.
- 7.Cassette player and tape.
- 8.Dice/box/spinning wheel

Evaluations:

Staff were always surprised at how such as simple activity could be done successfully and meet a variety of children's needs. Repeating the activity in another room gave staff that did not have many opportunities to

work with small groups the occasion to do so without intrusions and observations from other staff which can be daunting. Resources are very easily found as they related to items being used in the topic and sometimes laminated photographs of them. Another useful resource is a large blank dice or box , or spinning wheel which you can attach photographs too.

Ideas and tips for others considering similar ventures:

It is important to agree when and where the small group work will take place and who is going to do it . It is recommended that the same member of staff takes the same group of children each time. You will need a quiet space prepared for use e.g. mats on the floor in a horse shoe shape, and so will have to consider what else is happening in the setting at that time. Resources must be ready and staff should use the same words, songs, routines etc each week so that children feel comfortable and able to participate to their full potential.

Rachel Schofield- Newton, Area SENCo



Sand and More Sand

Theme:

Playing in the sand can be a way of developing communication opportunities for learners at all stages.

Aims:

To challenge practitioners to think about how they can support the development of early communication skills through the medium of sand play.

"Babies and children develop their competence in communicating through having frequent, enjoyable interactions with other people, in contexts that they understand."

Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum DfES 2007

"We mostly communicate with one another because communication itself is enjoyable, interesting, fulfilling, emotionally rewarding, it enables us to be close to other people, to have relationships."

Hewett D and Nind M: A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction BILD Publications 2001

Setting description:

St Marie's Day Nursery provides full and part day care and education for children aged 2.5 to 4. with wraparound care for children who attend the attached Infant school. There are children from a wide variety of non English speaking backgrounds, including, Polish, Dutch, Portuguese, Thai, Hungarian, Mexican Spanish and Romanian.

In addition support at Early Years Action Plus was provided for a little girl who has Down Syndrome. She attended a Local Authority Nursery Class for 5 sessions supported by a Teaching Assistant. She loved playing in the sand.

Activity:

Sand play was chosen as many children enjoy this activity, but it is often one where children are left to their own devices.

One half day INSET exploring the uses of sand and looking at how communication develops and discussing

strategies to support learners at different stages. Video material from ICan (ICan Talk booklet and video -Tesco Baby and Toddler Club, I CAN 2003) was used to support this.

This was followed by 6 visits working with small groups of children to develop their interaction skills through sand play and modelling strategies for practitioners. A sample learning plan was used.

2 main points were discussed:

POINT 1

Developing communication.

- What does 'communication' mean?
- Communication is more than words and involves a whole range of skills which we develop from infancy.
- Some of the young children we meet are working at different stages of communication to their chronological age. This can happen for many reasons.
- Whatever their age we have to work with their stage of communication.

POINT 2

What words do the children need to know?

- To name the tools and equipment they are using – e.g. so they can ask for something they want.
- To talk about what they are doing – e.g. action words like tip, fill, dig, bury.
- To talk about what they are experiencing and observing – e.g. wet, dry, sticky, full, all gone, empty.
- Typically developing children need to hear a word at least 50 times before they really know it.
- Children with language difficulties need to hear and see the word in action many more times than this.

Suggestions for practitioners:

When working with all children you need to be able to judge what stage the child's communication and learning skills are at and what their next step is. One very effective way of doing this is:

- Follow the child's lead – observe, watch, wait, and think about your response.



The challenge for adults is to think about their use of language,

- Reduce how much we talk when playing.
- Keep it simple
- Keep it visual
- Avoid questions
- Pauses and silences are ok!
- Repeat repeat repeat!

In the table below are some suggestions for targeted work for children with differing levels of communication development.

Ideas for others:

Resources:

- Sand – this can be experienced at different scales -in small trays or containers, for one to one work or in the sand tray where a group of children can play, make sure that the area isn't overcrowded.
- Where is the sand sited – outside? At floor level? On a table top?
- Sand toys – keep them specific to the learning objective if developing knowledge of concepts like full and empty. Don't over load the sand tray
- No toys! Sometimes just experiencing the sand can be enough.

- It is inevitable that we can start an activity with a plan in mind – today we are going to learn about full and empty. You can guarantee that the children will develop their own agenda as the activity progresses!

The adult's role

- Think about how you play
- Think about how you communicate
- Think about how you interact
- Who leads?

And remember - WHOSE PLAY IS IT ANYWAY?

Useful websites:

- ICan Talk – www.ican.org.uk
- Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum – www.standard.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation_stage/eyfs
- Communicating Matters – www.surestart.gov.uk/research/keyresearch/earlylanguagedevelopment
- Dave Hewett Intensive Interaction – www.davehewett.com

Santina Baddeley, Area SENCo

Learning Objectives	To develop early interaction skills with individual children, depending on stage of communication development. 1 Child to engage in 2+ repetitions of fun activity with adult. 2 Child to engage in 2+ turns at fun activity with adult.
Extended Objectives	To develop vocabulary for naming objects and actions. To extend language. To develop attention to task. To develop stages of cooperative play. 1 Child to copy and use new vocabulary, e.g. trowel, sieve, funnel. 2 Child to use new vocabulary spontaneously 3 Child to request turn with equipment either non verbally or with speech.
Activity	Using sand tray as focus. Adult to sit at children's level. Adult to watch, wait, observe before attempting interaction. Interaction depending on child's stage: 1 copying play 2 engaging in play – e.g. holding hands under pouring sand, pouring sand into container. 3 responding to child's interest by repetition of activity. Responding to child's communication (verbal or non verbal) with comment, reinforcement, modelling of language and action.
Extended Activities	1 Commenting on play / equipment at 1-2 word level 2 Structuring turn taking / sharing by modelling of language and play

Using Activity Sacks to develop Language Skills

Theme:

To produce and use a resource (language activity sacks) that develops communication and language skills in Early Years Settings.

Based on Philosophy/Idea:

The development and use of communication and language are at the heart of young children's learning'

'Children learn best when actively engaging many senses.'

DFES (2007) The Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (p39)

As practitioners we felt the need to respond to the repeated request for a communication resource.

Aims:

The compilation of this resource aims to;

- Enable all children to become confident communicators by developing the skills of eye contact, turn taking, and auditory memory, to give them access to future learning.
- Equip practitioners with a user-friendly bank of ideas, for use within any setting.
- Use communication and language skills in a variety of ways.

'it is through a child's capacity to use language in a wide variety of ways that his ability to think, to reason, to store and re use his experiences develops.'

Hutchcroft, Making language Work (1981)

Mc Graw – Hill Dock Co. Ltd . UK. (p1)

- Provide enjoyable activities for the learner and practitioner to enjoy together.
- Develop children's experiences through multi sensory activities.

- Share good practise between parents, practitioners and other professionals - (E.g. Speech and Language Therapists).

Setting descriptions:

- Settings within South Warwickshire
- LEA/Independent Schools/Non maintained
- Rural and urban
- Variable –staffing levels, sizes, budgets
- Providing learning and care to children with varying- socio economic backgrounds ethnicity gender levels of special need

Resources:

5x 5 minute sacks and contents (Each sack covered a different language skill - eye contact, receptive language, expressive language, turn taking, auditory memory.)

A spiral bound communication booklet explaining the language activities and providing the resources required for each activity was produced following evaluation.



Activities initiated:

1. As Area SENCO's we discussed with staff in settings the areas of communication that they felt they needed greatest support in.
2. We made and resourced 5 sacks targeting these areas.
3. Together, groups of children were identified for a trial delivery.
4. As Area SENCO's we either modelled or discussed the content of the 5 minute bag activities to the identified staff.
5. The activities (ideas and resources) were then left with the settings for them to use and evaluate.
6. We collated the evaluations, adapted the resourcing and responded to the request in the following ways - see table below.



Ideas and tips for others considering similar ventures:

- Secure funding first to produce your resource.
- Encourage settings to photograph group work for evidence.
- Be very clear about evaluating, what is it you want to find out? Be prepared for the evaluation to take your project in an unexpected direction. For example, this project has led to the production of a spiral bound booklet.
- Always use the multi disciplinary team as a resource for shared knowledge and practise.
- Always ask others for their agreement if you intend to use any of their material.
- Evidence of your project's effectiveness may crop up in unexpected places so keep your eyes open! (Our work has featured in IEP's for children).



Evaluation comments	Action/response
'I would use stronger plastic cups, which could also be different colours'	Resource replaced with suggested properties.
'the groan tube got bent' 'the ping pong balls didn't last long!'	As a resource used frequently, funding for replacement would be needed. 1 bag per patch (S Warwickshire) does not meet demand. Consider settings resourcing themselves.
'I think the settings would like to have them to develop in the future and always there to use when you have a 5 minute space' 'a model for settings to make their own'	Develop the resource as a spiral bound communication resource for targeted settings to have for trial during 2007/8. Discuss funding for this with senior manager.
Earlier more detailed dialogue with SALT would have enhanced resource further.	Continue dialogue and consultation with SALT as modified resource is trialled.

Keeva Austin and Julie Morris, Area SENCOs

Good Looking, Good Listening, Good Sitting

Theme:

Supporting Innovation and Inclusion in Early Years Settings.

Based on Philosophy/ ideas:

Creating a Communication Friendly Environment
"A Communication Friendly Environment enables learners (pupils) to develop their social, emotional and academic potential by reducing or removing barriers to communication. Surroundings that eliminate or minimise barriers to the sending or receiving of information, successfully enable children to develop their academic, social and emotional potential."

(DISCS/ North and South Warwickshire PCT CFE Audits 1, 2 and 3)

In the Principles for Early Years Education from the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (2000) it is clearly identified that "No child should be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability." And that "The focus should be on removing barriers where these already exist and on preventing learning difficulties from developing."

Removing barriers to learning — by embedding inclusive practice in every school and early years setting (Removing Barriers)

Aims:

To support understanding of "good sitting" "good listening" and "good looking" through experiences which have meaning for the children and so develop their understanding of expected behaviour in group situations.

Children are often told that their behaviour is "good" or that they have "done well." This can be very ambiguous and children may not be aware of exactly which part of their behaviour is "good." For children with any type of communication difficulty this will be particularly difficult, but also in mixed aged groups with younger children

where their language skills are still at an earlier stage of development this may be a challenge.

By using symbols and clearly teaching the meaning of the symbols all ambiguity is removed, and so the children can respond consistently to the directions.

In this example the instruction can be given either by using the symbol with the verbal instruction, or as a simple non-verbal reminder just by showing the symbol. Therefore reminders of expected behaviour do not disturb the flow of the activity and children can very clearly see what is expected.

"Use objects, pictures and gestures to support what you are saying and encourage children to do the same. Don't expect children to learn language just by hearing it- they need to associate what they hear with what they see and do."
(I-CAN talk! 2003)

Useful books/websites:

www.ican.org.uk
www.widgit.co.uk

Description of settings:

The two settings that introduced the symbols in this manner were, coincidentally, both "pack away" sessional Pre-school's based in a Church hall and a Community Hall, although the symbols could be used in any type of setting.

Both settings take children aged from 2-4 years with approximately 20 children and 5 members of staff. During the session there are times when the whole group meet together for singing, story and whole group times. It was suggested that visual symbols may benefit the larger group times to support understanding and to promote positive behaviour. Both settings were very keen to try using the symbols and all members of staff were involved in observing the teaching sessions so that they could then use the symbols themselves.

Activity initiated:

A block of four teaching sessions were arranged with each setting, over four weeks.

In each session the focussed activity was based on clearly identifying what was "good looking," "good sitting" and "good listening." Each week the focus was on one of the symbols with activities and a story, the general format of the teaching session was the same each week:-

Example of lesson plan.

Learning Objectives:

- 1.To reinforce the use of "whole group" symbols.
- 2.To develop "good listening" identifying clearly what is expected by "good listening"
3. Maintain the structure of the session-Hello song, introduce focus activity, story, singing, good- bye song.

Repeated Activities

Hello and Good-bye Songs

Singing- Finger rhymes- Up the tall white candlestick, The engine on the line, Here is a house.

Use of symbols.

New Activities

Introduction- Remind children of the symbol cards and see if they can remember what each card means.

Hello Song

Introduce: Listening activities- Instruments hidden under a cloth- guess the instrument (from a choice of 4)

Story- "Peace at Last"-

Singing

Good-bye Song-

Resources

Symbol cards

Big Book-Peace at Last

4 different instruments with a matching partner.

Name labels for children

Resources (including adults):-

Symbols: A5 laminated available from IDS Teaching and Learning Staff, or "Communicate in Print" if have access. All adults in the setting to be involved in the use of the symbols, both observing how they are being used and then using them for the whole group in the times between teaching sessions.

Ideas and tips for others considering similar ventures:

- Think about the organisation of group times,
- The position of the group leader,
- The position and comfort of children,
- Where other members of staff are sitting.
- Consider what else is happening in the room at teaching times

Sandra Bowering, IDS Teaching and Learning Area SENCo



Picture That!



Theme:

Supporting and developing language enhancement, attention and listening, turn taking and interactive skills through the use of picture books in a small number of non maintained settings. This has been further enhanced with the use of puppets following attendance of 'Creative Behaviour Management' course at The British Association for Early Childhood Education Head Office, Cavell Street, London.

Based on Philosophy/Idea:

E.Arizpe and M.Styles (2003) completed research to discover how visual text are read by children throughout their study they have been able to conclude 'that picture books are important throughout the primary age and indeed do require higher skills' (2003).

'Every page offers colour to a child's imagination it is the role of the practitioner to provide the environment to catch the growth of this imagination and give the child the strategies to enhance communication.' (unknown)

Aims:

To promote language use and enhancement through the use of picture books and puppets.

To encourage practitioners to give children the time to talk; developing their social and interactive skills and awareness. The importance of this is discussed by Sue Palmer when she outlines the seven strands of literacy in the foundation stage; one of these being 'Time to Talk - ... social speech skills, including awareness of audience and turn-taking; vocabulary development; ... development

of language to explain, explore, plan, predict, recall and analyse.' (Literacy Today Issue 38 2004).

To remind practitioners to have fun with the children... 'another truth, universally acknowledged yet all too often forgotten: children - all children - learn much, much better when they're having FUN.' Sue Palmer (2004)

Rationale:

The aims of language enhancement are far reaching and extensive. This initiative is focused on placing a firm basis to build on whilst allowing every child to be included and develop skills.

Useful books/websites:-

- Extremely useful picture book 'Window' by Jeannie Baker (born in England now living in Australia) – Australian Children's Picture Book of the Year – Young Australian's Best Picture Book Award – Notable Book in the Field of Social Sciences.
- Jeannie Baker's marvellous collage pictures have never been more fascinating ... her message never more timely. A picture book for all ages. Australian bookseller and Publisher.
- Each child will see something different – that's the joy of the story. Books for Keeps.
- www.littletigerpress.com – good site for settings to use for information and for use with children – includes activity sheets; colouring sheets and advise on different picture books and their related topics.
- www.booktrusted.co.uk – good for settings for own information.
- www.familyreading.org.uk – part of literacytrust.org.uk – very good advice papers for parents/carers on how to read to children; good for advisors to early years.

Setting description:

This initiative was utilised in different settings in South Warwickshire. These were non maintained settings catering for children rising 3's to rising 5's. The project was sampled in a number of different settings in order to establish the varied ways in which picture story books and puppets can adapt to different teaching styles and

environments as well as to introduce a more imaginative/ creative approach to including each child.

Each setting had a common factor; they were all willing to explore children's imaginations in order to provide a solid basis to enhance and develop interaction and language skills – children of varied abilities

For example, one setting had some children at EYA+ and another setting had some children at EYA included in the groups. The feedback indicates that this style of teaching offers scope for all children to be included.

The setting included children from a wide mix of backgrounds and abilities. This broad mix enriched the settings providing diverse platforms for the children's imaginations.

Activities initiated:

Activities included drama/role play sessions, more structured small group sessions, one to one sessions and whole group sessions. These focused on picture story books, such as 'The Window' J. Barker, with the additional use of puppets to further develop the activity.

I have produced a bank of lesson plans for settings to follow outlining the activities.

For example, open the picture book to the first page and discuss whole picture. Model talking about the picture, telling children what you can see and what you like about it. It may be appropriate to interact with the puppet in order to model interaction. Involve the child/children by asking what they like about the picture (use sand timer to establish a start and finish of activity if needed). Children take turns talking about what they notice on the page (use sand timer if needed).

As progression with the book develops the amount of time spent on the activity can increase. Each session needs to be flexible to the child's needs and these sessions are enhanced with the use of puppets, cut out paper windows etc (coloured sheet of paper with different shaped windows cut out to highlight different parts of the page in order to focus each child). This often leads to use of the real windows in the room to discuss what can be seen comparing views from different windows in the building. Puppets can break down the barrier between adult and child introducing a 'safe' character for the child to relate to as the child sees it as having no preconceived expectations.

Resources:

- Puppets/finger puppets
- Window by Jeannie Baker
- Different coloured laminated pages with different shapes cut out (windows)
- Sandtimers
- Clothes for puppets eg scarves, hats etc (easy to make – cut out of felt).
- Good listening, looking, sitting prompts.
- Pre school practitioners

Ideas and tips for others considering similar ventures:

Always be flexible using the ideas from the children ie be prepared to change your lesson plan and have alternatives available when children are loosing interest. Collect information and explore new ideas and adjust teaching style to suit 'mood' of group.

'Be aware of the setting environment as it could have implications on the behaviour of young children.' Anni McTavish 2007. I found it worked well in a quiet area away from distractions.

When moving on to other books consider the choice of materials carefully. 'As children construct knowledge based on their experiences, their thinking, language and social skills grow.' Anni McTavish 2007.

Use the puppet in different situations to promote language use and have fun!

Photos, description of setting following new initiative and/or comments from staff, children parents

Settings have reported the book 'Window' by Jeannie Baker has been very successful and popular with children of all ages and abilities. In conversation with practitioners they have commented that the book provide a wealth of resources and stimuli for lots of activities. The puppets have also been used to model sharing and being kind etc as well as providing an extra element to language enhancement.

Photos of equipment and resources (taken from child's eye level)

- Pre school practitioners reported having started to use puppets again proved very useful for verbal and non verbal interactive group work.
- Children can be involved with finger puppets these can be used to involve each child regardless of ability.
- Picture books can be used in lots different situations – not just story time.
- The children look forward to meeting the puppet and talk about it at home.
- Lots of parents asked 'who is rabbit?' as their children have talked about 'rabbit' at home. Rabbit is the main puppet used in the sessions and seems to capture the children's imagination.
- Other comments from parents included 'why does keep asking me to look through the window?'

Julia Sale, Area SENCo

Stress Management and Well-Being for Parents

Theme /Title:

Bringing up children is a rewarding but very demanding job for all parents. It is particularly so for parents who have to cope with additional problems such as lack of money, poor housing, long-term unemployment, and for those families which include a child with special educational needs. All of these additional pressures can leave parents feeling tired and unable to cope; this can result in ill health.

Based on the Philosophy / Idea:

Parents often spend so much time and energy meeting the needs of their children that they often forget about the importance of their own wellbeing.

'Stress Management and Well Being for Parents' is a work shop that aims to enable parents to find the right balance between meeting the needs of their children and finding time for themselves.

Aims:

- To give parents an awareness of what stress is and the difference between stress and pressure
- To look at causes of stress and how to recognise their own early warning signs
- To discuss ways of tackling stress
- To give opportunities to take part in tension releasing exercises, practice massage and relaxation techniques and look at stress management resources
- To give parents the opportunity to come together and gain support from each other

Setting:

Workshops are regularly offered to parents as part of support groups such as the Early Bird Programme for parents with pre-school children on the Autistic Spectrum and Behaviour Management Courses. A session was also delivered at our Birth to Three Family Service Christmas Coffee Morning.

Resources:

Essential oils and massage tools
CD player and Relaxation CDs
Oil Burner and Candles
Cushions
Handouts
Stress Management books

Evaluation comments:

- I could do with this every week
- Really enjoyed the session
- Had a wonderful morning
- Felt really relaxed
- Very useful really enjoyed it
- Would like to do it again – not long enough
- Thank you for giving me permission to relax

Ideas and tips for others considering similar ventures:

- Providing a crèche can be useful for parents with small children
- Ensure the room is warm and it has curtains or blinds at the windows. It is difficult to relax if you are cold or have people watching you.
- This course can bring out lots of discussion and issues. Be prepared!

Action / response:

Many parents commented that one session was not sufficient and expressed a need for a longer course.

As a result a new six week course called "Chill Out! It's Me Time" to be developed. This will be delivered to early years practitioners working within Warwickshire in 2008/09. Completion of this course will enable them to deliver to parents.

Jeanette Smith
Team Leader Birth to Three Family Service



Infant Massage

Theme:

Offered by the Birth To Three Family Service to Families receiving a service from the Integrated Disability Service, Teaching and Learning.

Philosophy:

Infant massage is a communication through touch, and offers a period of time each day when a parent is fully concentrating on the infant and conveys in a very direct way love, care and respect, and of course massage is fun.

Aims:

To support parents and carers, in developing a communication through touch, which in turn may benefit their infant/young child, in a variety of ways including;

- Helps infant to accept touch and associate it as something positive.
- Improvement in eye contact and interaction with others.
- Supports the bonding process.
- Promotes the relaxation of tense muscles.

Benefits for parents/carers may include:

- Bonding and relaxation.
- Communication verbal and non verbal.
- Increased confidence in relating to and handling infant/young child.
- Opportunity to put therapies and invasive procedures to one side.

Useful Websites:

International Association of Infant Massage.

www.iaim.org.uk

Resources and Training Courses.

www.touchlearn.co.uk

Information on training and research.

www.messageinschools.com

Setting:

Infant Massage is offered to the parents/carers in their own home. After the initial referral has been received, contact is made with the family and a visit arranged. Two to three visits are usually offered with a two week break between so parents have an opportunity to practice the strokes demonstrated.

Structure of visit:

Each visit is tailored to meet the needs of the infant and their family. Permission is always asked from the infant before massage begins, and the lead is always taken from them, and parents encouraged to respond to cues, verbal and non verbal. Strokes sometimes have to be adapted or even left out to meet the needs of the infant.

Once the strokes have been shown to parents they begin to develop their own routine fitting it into their family life and finding the most appropriate time, for massage to be enjoyed. Following the visits parents can be sign posted to local classes if appropriate.

Resources:

Training to become a certified Infant massage instructor, was accessed through the International Association of Infant Massage, (website mentioned earlier) The training takes place over four days, and is followed by a home exam which has to be completed within four months of training.

Instructors demonstrate on a doll, which are available through Touch Needs. Oil is provided by the Massage instructor along with a copy of all the strokes, parents provide a suitable changing mat, nappies and a towel.

Comments from Parents Evaluations:

What did you like best about the course?

"Done in the home in a friendly manner"

"The one to one, made you feel what you are doing for your child is right and beneficial"

"Fun way it was presented, made me feel i could adapt it to suit mine and my child's needs"

"The stomach massage, as my son gets a lot of trapped wind.(and the massage has helped to move it)"

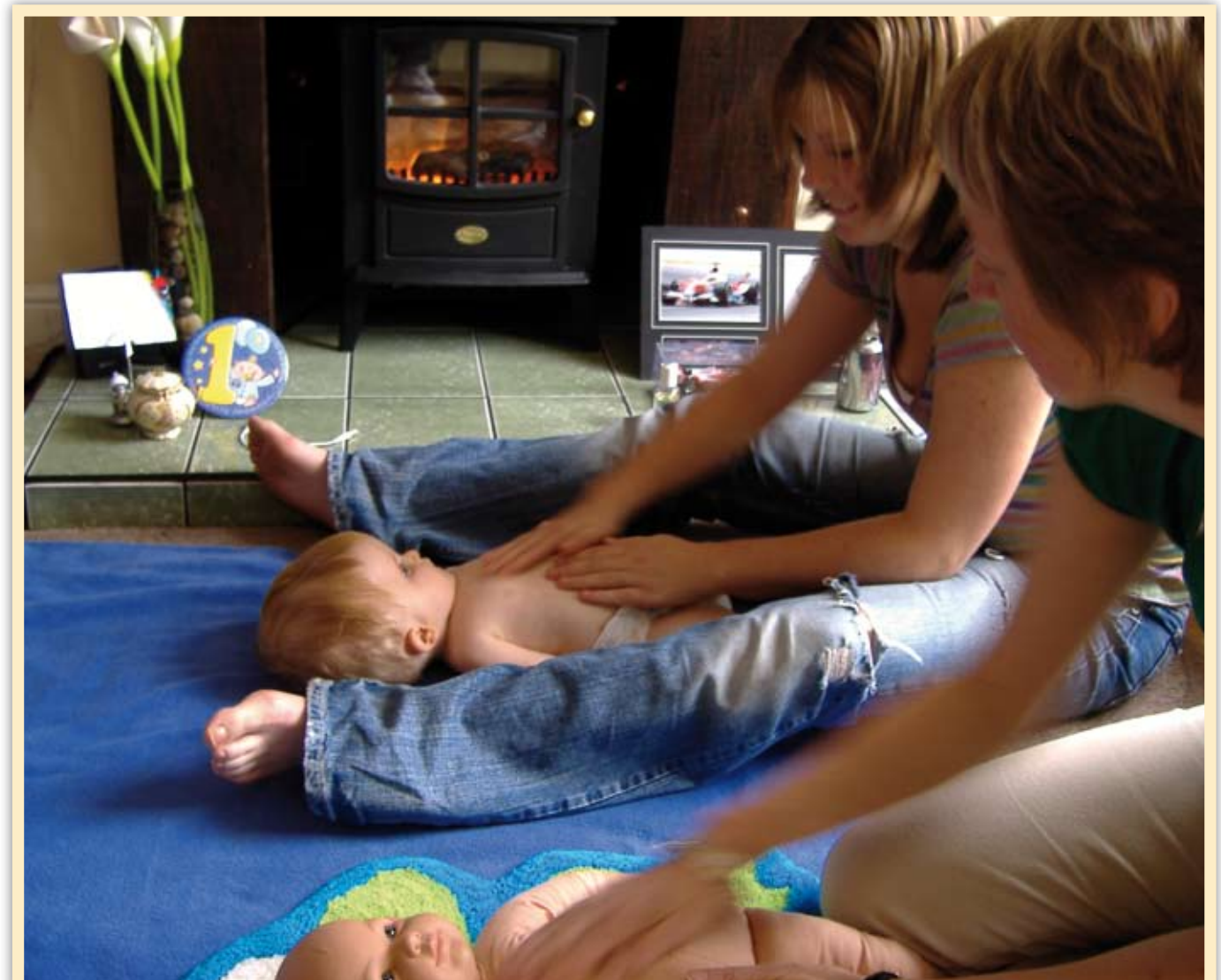
"Time out to enjoy massage and time together"

Contact details for further information:

Anne Avery

Certified Infant Massage Instructor

0-3 Child Development Adviser



Home Visiting

Based on Philosophy:

To work alongside children and their families in a familiar environment, enabling parents/carers to support their children to reach their full potential.

Aim:

- To support parents in recognising their child's level of development.
- To work together to provide a learning journey with agreed Play Targets.
- Empower parents to move their child's development forward.

Setting:

Play Visits in families own homes across the county of Warwickshire.

Sign Posting Parents to:

- Pre-School Settings,
- Childminders
- Stay and Play Groups
- Parent Support Groups

Providing Parent Training Courses

- Handling Children's Behaviour
- Earlybird
- Baby Signing
- Baby Massage

Resources:

Home Visitors have access to a specialised Toy Library. Toys can be loaned to the families to support specific Play Targets.

Activities:

- Weekly Play Sessions are planned to link in with agreed Play Targets, copies of which are given to parents.
- During the session activities are modelled by the Home Visitor, parents/carers are encouraged to actively engage in these sessions.



- Parents/Carers continue to work with their children on these activities throughout the week.

Evaluation Comments:

Comments

The home visitor was extremely supportive and helpful to us through a very difficult time for us as parents.

A very good support network, good ideas, very friendly to us as a whole family unit.

What did you find most useful

Tips and advice on encouraging development through play.

I found the whole experience very useful, very relaxed experience because it was in our own home.

Tips:

Flexibility

Always be prepared to follow the needs of the family.

Jackie Turnbull, 0-3 Child Development Adviser

Stay and Play at Exhall Assessment Nursery

Based on Philosophy/Idea:

- To develop multi agency working with IDS Child Development Advisers and Assessment Nursery Staff. "Inter- Agency Co-operation to Improve Wellbeing of Children" HM Government (2006) Working Together to Safeguard Children (pg23).
- To work jointly with parents. "they are accessible, welcoming and value the views and involvement of parents", DFES (2001), SEN, Code of Practice, (pg18)
- To provide a safe total communication environment for children with SEN to interact with others and develop their play opportunities.

Aims:

- An opportunity for children to meet and interact with other children to develop their social skills.
- An opportunity for children to try new and different experiences.
- An opportunity for parents to meet with other parents who have children with similar difficulties.

"Parents and families are central to the well-being of the child"

DfES (2003) Birth to three matters (pg4).



Setting Description:

- Exhall Assessment Nursery.
- An LEA Nursery.
- Providing places for local identified children with SEN.

"An appropriate environment is essential to both safety and effective learning and development".

DfES (2007) The Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage (pg17).

Resources:

- A messy play/craft activity each week to develop children's experiences through multi sensory activities.
- Song/Rhyme time with the use of Makaton sign and symbols to aid communication.

"A skilful communicator, Listening and Responding"

DfES (2003) Birth to Three Matters.

Evaluation Comments:

- Contact with other parents is very supportive.
- Talking to staff and being at the nursery gives you an insight into educational provision for the future.
- Social side nice for the children to meet other children of similar ability.

Ideas and Tips for others considering a similar group:

To visit the stay and play group and talk to parents.

Action/Response:

To continue with the group and discuss the idea of a more structured parent support group.

Gill Marshall
0-3 Child Development Adviser

Information Books

Theme/title:

The use of information books to aid the transition from home to an early years setting.

Based on philosophy/idea:

Parents are often anxious about their child's first experience within a nursery setting; this anxiety may be heightened when the child is unable to communicate their needs, likes and dislikes or when the child has complex medical needs. The book is a way to communicate the child's needs clearly without the need for the parent/carer to repeat information to all staff within the setting and to equip staff with accurate information to ensure that they are able to meet the child's needs appropriately.

"The ability to share information about a family and child is an essential pre-requisite to the joint and holistic review and co-ordination of services and support"... "Without this, the opportunity to build a cumulative picture of the child's abilities and needs over time is lost and parents are left with the responsibility of bringing every new professional they meet up to speed".

DfES, (2004) Early Support, Professional Guidance. (p61).

The 'All about me' books provide a link between professions and ensure continuity of care.

"Key to this (good transition) is ensuring continuity between all settings and that children's social, emotional and educational needs are addressed appropriately. Transition should be seen as a process, not an event, and should be planned for and discussed with children and parents."

DfES, (2007), Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. (p10).

Aims:

- To provide the setting with important information about the child/children entering their setting.
- To provide continuity between settings/environments.
- To avoid parents having to repeat information to each member of staff.
- To provide insight into a child's individual likes/dislikes and mannerisms to help make transition comfortable and individual to each child.

Setting descriptions:

The books were produced in partnership with parents and are particularly for children with learning/communication difficulties entering an early year's environment.

Resources:

- A camera to take photographs of the children, to provide picture examples and to illustrate the books.
- Completed laminated, bound book

Activities initiated:

The information in the books was set out under the following headings:

- Introducing..... (Child's name). This section gives information about who the child is and immediate family/who is in their family home.
- Medical needs-this section highlights any medical conditions, medication the child is on and individual warning signs of ill health for staff to look out for.
- Things that I like-favourite toys, activities, foods are described here.
- Things that I don't like-dislikes such as food; particular sounds etc are described in this section.
- The finished books were given to parents to share with other professionals and to put in the child's nursery bag to accompany them when they go.



Ideas & tips for considering similar ventures:

- It is important that information about the child is accurate-write the book in conjunction with the parent/primary carer, double checking information before completing final copy. Remember that parents know their children best!
- Gather photographic evidence of the child/equipment etc to illustrate the book.
- Discuss with the setting the usefulness of the resource and any additional information/sections of the book that they would find helpful.
- Include advice from other professionals involved in the care of the child e.g. Physiotherapist, Occupational therapist, Speech & Language therapist to ensure the book reflects a holistic picture of the child's needs and abilities.
- Keep a copy of the book on disc and give a copy to parents so that the book can be updated as the child develops.

Evaluation Comments:

"The book is an excellent way to introduce the girls to nursery. The book made me feel confident that all the kids' likes, dislikes etc have been communicated. Hence, I felt more comfortable leaving them".

Quote from a parent

Comments from nursery staff:

"The books were a good introduction to the children, they gave an insight into their likes and dislikes which can often take a while to learn when a child first starts at nursery. It was particularly useful to have medical information about the children so we know individual signs of what to look out for when they are ill."

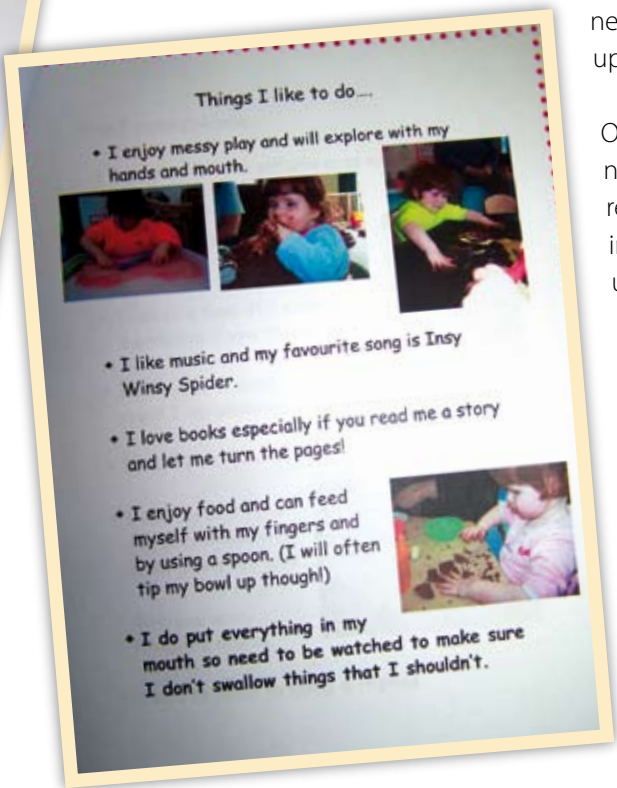
Action/response:

In the future when transition books are created it would be useful to include direct advice from other professionals involved. A multi agency meeting would be useful to gather all the information needed.

As this is a resource that would be used frequently with children, funding would be needed and time designated to updating the books.

Ownership of the books needs to be decided, is it the responsibility of a professional involved with the child to update it or the parent?

Donna Karwacki,
0-3 Child Development
Adviser



Getting Better all the Time



Theme:

A Discussion Around Improving Inclusive Practice in a Growing Setting.

Philosophy:

"The culture, practice, management and deployment of resources in a school or setting are designed to ensure all children's needs are met"

The SEN Code of Practice 2001

The Aim:

This is a record of the discussion held at a setting after a year of change. At the beginning of the year the setting wanted to improve inclusion for all children. The aim is to encourage others to review their inclusive practice.

The Setting:

Peter Pan is a setting serving mainly a Nepalese and English army community. This means that children can come and go with little warning and to meet the needs of the community the setting has expanded to register for full day care.

There has been an almost total change of staff and the numbers of children on role have tripled. Every year there are a number of children with a range of needs, both at EYA and EYA+. Nearly 50% of the intake has English as an additional language.

"It has been a massive amount of change but you have to do listen to parents and they need longer nursery hours. The trouble is you want to run before you walk. I want full day care and holiday club and breakfast club and after school club and a baby room and a mother and baby group by tomorrow! You can't do that; you have to go slowly and work up to it. We'd crack if we tried to do all that at once!"

Activities:

With so many changes it was almost like starting from scratch. Training and team development were a priority and developing practice and environment. Preparation began with a meeting to prioritise the needs of both the setting and the children with SEN. Managing behaviour was the number one priority, particularly with such varied experiences from such different countries. So two pieces of INSET were run on behaviour management and appropriate levels of language. Staff also sat down with the EDS training programme and looked at attending as wide a range of courses as possible.

"It was really good having the behaviour training early in the year because we were all doing the same thing from the beginning. The cue cards and making sure you all used the same language all the time was really useful. You can then begin to see which children are really finding it difficult to follow instructions or manage their own behaviour."

The environment was then looked at to make it more communication friendly and easier to manage. The



emphasis was on creating areas for children to work in where they could be increasingly independent. Drawers were labelled. Black sacks were used liberally! Visual timetables were put up. Quiet and loud areas were better defined and any long corridors of space in the room were broken up with furniture. Staff observed how the children began the morning and moved from activity to activity. Staff also made sure they could see the whole room at a glance.

"The children are so much better at tidying up. Lots of the difficult behaviour at tidy up time has gone because they can be independent. Some of the children, like the ones with autism find it so much easier. It makes it easier for us."

The staff then closed for a whole day to plan the next stages as a team. Long term plans and dreams were made. Some things were big, like having a washing machine and a new access to the toilets but some things were about changing where the paper was kept or how to fit in preparing snack or managing nappy changes in keyworker groups.

"We are getting much better at thinking about why something works or doesn't and coming up with ideas to change. That day to think together was brilliant. It helps when everyone knows that we all want the same thing. We also try and find lots of places for funding. Sometimes there are grants or you can raise the money for something special. If you don't ask you don't get."

With increasing numbers of children in each session it was important to break the session into smaller groups, particularly for those children with SEN who were finding a whole group too busy and distracting. So the session was completely restructured, with small family groups meeting together during the session. Lots of lists were made about what was done before, during and after the session, planning sheets went up in each area on wipe clean boards.

"We knew what we wanted but couldn't quite get it right. We needed someone from the outside to look at what we were trying and give us fresh eyes. The first couple of days of new organisation were a challenge but we settled down so fast."

By the end of the week the children could tell us what was happening! There is less wandering, the children are more settled, they all join in at group times. We feel more in control, spending time developing play. You can sit with a group and look up and see every child engaged."

Alongside the differences in the room with the children all the policies have been reviewed and in some cases re-written. Staff have attended all the SEN training offered through the EDS Training and Development book. All the staff and the committee have been involved in thinking about the policies and looking at drafts. It has been a challenge and taken lots of hours.

"We have so many children with SEN that you have to get it right and we wanted all parents to feel it was okay if there was a problem. They have to be able to talk to you and you need to be able to talk to them. It is taking time to go through the policies but we are getting there."

Evaluation of the work so far:

"We are getting better at knowing what we need to write and who to go to for help. It is changing and growing all the time though and you need to access the up to date training. It is fine while everything is okay but if it goes wrong you want to know what to do."

"We are only just starting really. There still needs more work on the environment. Observation and record keeping needs looking at, planning will be changing, the setting want a better way of using photos both to support learning and record keep. But that is next. You have to keep remembering how far we have come and give yourself a bit of a pat because we are on the right track."

Our biggest resources were time and enthusiasm. Next to that come a digital camera, black sacks and ideas. More practical has been visual timetable resources and money to go on courses. We had lots of support from parents and the committee. We are part of the community and we can welcome everybody and that is great."

Clare Woodman, Area SENCo

Using Storyboards for an Inclusive Storytime

Philosophy/Idea:

Communication Friendly Environment (An environment that eliminates or minimises barriers to communication and enables children to develop their academic, social and emotional potential).

'All children learn best through activities that engage all their senses'

'As children develop speaking and listening skills they build the foundations for literacy, for making sense of verbal and visual signs'

Communication, Language and Literacy (Card 4.2 Principles into Practice DFES (2007) The Early Years Foundation Stage

Aims and Quotes:

The aim of using storyboards is to;

- Provide opportunities for the children to become actively involved in story times
- To experience story and rhyme through sight and sound
- As storyboards are repeated children will gain experience of using symbols
- Symbols provide early literacy experiences and this is often reflected in increased expressive language

'In order to meet children's diverse needs, and help all children make the best progress, practitioners should provide a wide range of opportunities to motivate, support and develop children and help them be involved, concentrate and learn effectively'

'Children are more likely to talk and listen when they understand key language connected with the activity'

(Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage 2000)

Setting description:

Sunbeams is a pre-school for children aged 2½ - 4. Approximately 20 pre-school children attend in the mornings and 12 younger children in the afternoon supported by 3 members of staff. Throughout the session the pre-school provide opportunities for small and large group adult led sessions and have children in the setting with a range of communication difficulties and English as an additional language.

This is one example of a setting that attend training and have continued to use storyboards but they have also been used by independent Schools and LA nurseries with a range of staffing levels, budgets and learning environments.

Activity:

Storyboard training was delivered across the county by members of the IDS Teaching and Learning Pre-School Team (then known as DISCS) for early years settings in Warwickshire. The training encouraged practitioners to discuss the strengths and difficulties with their current storytime sessions and share good practice (Not always having storytime at the end of the day when the children are tired, thinking about sitting the children in a horse shoe arrangement, opportunities for the children to listen, respond and participate, supporting the story with props and visual cues, Having other adults in the setting sitting with the children rather than tidying up).

Ideas were shared regarding making the environment communication friendly (making children comfortable, no background distractions). The use of Storyboards were then introduced and modelled (using only a few symbols to start with, introducing more elements as the children become more familiar with the story). Practitioners were then given time to make storyboards to take back to there setting.

Resources:

1 or more members of staff

To make the story board : Large piece of thick card, Velcro, symbols (from widget or board maker or hand drawn pictures – approx 4-6 symbols on a sheet of A4), scissors, matt laminate and laminator. Good sitting, looking and listening cue cards.

Contact IDS Teaching and Learning Pre-school team for packs of symbols for traditional stories and nursery rhymes.

Ideas and Tips

- Practice using the storyboard so that you are comfortable with it before using it with the children (work out the sequence before hand)
- Place a strip of Velcro on the back of the board to keep all the symbols that are not in use
- A plain story board (with just strips of Velcro on) can be used for a variety of stories and rhymes. If you want to make the board more attractive Velcro things such as a collaged beanstalk down the side for Jack and the Beanstalk so that it can be removed for another story.
- Use strong/hard card for the base board.
- Think about using stories with a repetitive element.
- Pick out the main characters
- It has been adapted by some settings to incorporate reading schemes or 'Jolly Phonics'

Comments from setting after using storyboards:

"Using storyboards has been a fabulous way of extending the children's vocabulary. Being actively involved in storytime has raised their interest and increased their attention."

"It has helped children with poor communication skills immensely as they are able to follow the story visually, and helps their understanding. This has prompted us to make the whole of the pre-school more communication friendly by using visual cues in the environment."

Using storyboards has also helped with their counting and prediction skills.

Thanks to:

Staff and Children at Sunbeams, attendees of storyboard training, Santina Badderley, Gail Buckley, Dilys Davies, Carol Wiltshire, Rachel-Schofield Newton, Gill Truman, Linda Jones and IDS Teaching and Learning admin staff.

Colette Morris, Area SENCo



"A relaxing Christmas Party!?"

Theme:

The Birth to Three Family Service supports children (from birth to three years) who have special educational needs and their families in the home. Following on from a very successful event in 2005, the Birth to Three team for Rugby, Warwick and Stratford Districts organise an annual Christmas Coffee morning to provide an opportunity for the children and parents to get together.

Based on the Philosophy / Idea:

The Child Development Advisers visit the children and families in their homes all round the County. This Coffee Morning is a rare opportunity for all the families to get together and share experiences, establish support networks and enjoy themselves with their children.



Aims:

- To bring together children and parents and carers from all over the Rugby, Stratford and Warwick districts together in one place
- To provide an opportunity for parents to relax and feel comfortable amongst other families who may share similar experiences
- To reward parents and carers with a bit of "me time" through providing opportunities for treats like manicures, massages and relaxation tips and workshops

- To provide fun, multi-sensory activities for the children and a visit from Father Christmas

Setting:

Leamington Parents Centre in Lillington has been the base for the Coffee Mornings. This centre is able to provide a good sized room with suitable facilities and easy access for families. There is a kitchen and smaller rooms for workshops and therapies for parents.

Resources:

The Coffee Morning is organised on an informal basis giving the parents and children the option to join in or to sit and chat. Tea and coffee, cold drinks and mince pies are provided for parents and suitable drinks and snacks for the children.

Multi sensory activities on the theme of Christmas are organised according to the needs of the children. For example painting, messy play sessions with "snow" (gloop or similar) and glitter, and more glitter!

The key resource though is plenty of staff and volunteer helpers to play and interact with the children whilst parents and carers enjoy a short break or take advantage of one of the therapies or workshops. The help and support from colleagues in IDS has been invaluable and wouldn't work without their support. Parents and carers need to know their children are in safe hands before they can leave them alone and relax and enjoy their Christmas treat!

A variety of treats for parents have been organised. A local Health Spa very kindly let one of their Health and Beauty Therapist come along and provide manicures and hand massages for parents and carers. Great use has also been made of specialist skills from the Birth to Three Family Service Team and tips and techniques for relaxation was another workshop offered to our often very stressed families.

A token gift is provided for the children to be handed out by Santa.



Evaluation comments:

- Well organised and super morning for all!
- Had a great time.
- Thank you for inviting us,
- A great party. Thank you.
- Sarah really enjoyed the bright colours and sounds.
- "Very good fun for the kids-
- Nice for the parents!"
- Had fantastic time! Noah enjoyed his first Christmas party and we enjoyed it as well! Look forward to next year."

Ideas and tips for others considering similar events:

- Know your audience and make sure what you provide will suit all the children and families attending. Don't be too ambitious with activities- this is fun and relaxing event for all!
- Choose an established children's facility if possible to reduce the amount of toys and equipment needed. There should also be tailor made spaces and facilities for messy play, soft play, role play areas etc. in such venues
- Make sure that there are safe spaces for parents and carers to sit with hot drinks
- Offer a treat for the parents- too often, especially at Christmas, the children have all the fun and the

parents all the pressure and stress! Contact local health clubs or colleges who may have staff willing to volunteer to help out. Don't forget to ask around your own staff- they might have hidden talents or know someone else who can help.

- Lots of helpers! Multi-disciplinary working- ask around other sections or departments working with the children e.g. physiotherapists, keyworkers, etc if they could spare a hour or two to help out. Other parents too, whose children have gone on to school, can also be really good support for these events
- Choose your Father Christmas wisely! For some children this may be their first experience of Santa so it needs to be a positive one.



Action / Response:

The Christmas Coffee Morning has now become an annual event in the area and due to good responses from families a new bigger venue is being sort.

Gillian Henderson,
0-3 Child Development Adviser

Supporting and working with parents/ carers in Parenting Programmes

Theme:

Handling Children's Behaviour (HCB) – A Parent's Guide

Based on Philosophy:

To help parents/carers to understand their children's behaviour better, and as a result of improved understanding, to manage that behaviour more effectively.

Aims:

To build parent's confidence and self-esteem. It highlights and reinforces positive areas in each individual parent.

It adopts a 'no blame' approach to the parents that enables them to regain control of their children's behaviour.

Setting descriptions:

Throughout Warwickshire in identified needs based areas.

Resources:

Future National Childcare Training and Consultancy
- Handling Children's Behaviour Programme Manual and Handouts
- Handling Children's Behaviour – A parent guide booklet

Activities:

10 x 2hr weekly sessions. Each session follows the programme agenda as subscribed in the HCB manual.

Evaluation comments:

Really appreciate having the sense of unity with other mothers.
Great course
Very positive and non-judgemental
Learnt useful things
I try to do it now
I think this course will make a difference to me.

Other Parent Programmes on offer:

The Incredible Years (2-8 years) – Webster Stratton.

www.incredibleyears.com

Working with parents of teenagers

www.futurechildcaretraining.com

www.futurechildcaretraining.com

Solihull Approach

www.solihullkids.co.uk

Solution Focused Approach – Working with families in groups and in the home.

www.solihullkids.co.uk

The National Autistic Society – EarlyBird Programme

www.warwickshire.gov.uk

Harjinder Bahra, SEN Childcare Coordinator



Learning Circles

Theme:

The use of a Circle Time approach to support the development of learning skills and social/ emotional skills in preschool settings

Philosophy:

For most children preschool is a rewarding and enriching opportunity for social and cognitive learning, enhancing their self image as competent learners and valued participants, and ultimately developing a positive disposition towards learning.

On the other hand, without the essential tools of attention, concentration, communication and motivation which underpin learning, for some children the experience of preschool can be characterised by a lack of connection to the group and the learning opportunities available. In essence, a sense of not quite getting what it's all about. Gaps in these key skills can lead to inappropriate behaviour and, particularly where there are clusters of such children, behaviour management issues within the setting. It was in working with group of such children in several settings that the Learning Circles approach was adapted, drawing together elements of small group work and circle time.

Circle time in its truest form is aimed at helping children to develop an awareness of themselves and others and the social / emotional experience of being part of a group. It is a valuable and effective strategy which, when carefully planned and organised, can transform the dynamics of a group and support positive behaviour management.

However, large group activities can be a challenging experience for many children and need to be preceded by learning how to learn and function in group situations. In order to reach the stage where they are able to talk about feelings, social experiences and rules, children first need to learn to sit still, to focus their attention, to listen, to share ideas and to connect with the group and the learning opportunity being presented.

It is at this level that Learning Circles can be targeted from the time children are settled in nursery. Skills needed for more complex social learning are most effectively built up through activities that focus on key areas of attention, language, early social interaction and play before specific social skills programmes are introduced.

Learning Circles can have a significant impact through opportunities to learn and practice skills, from those as simple as making a circle, to understanding the rules of circle time to ultimately communicating and considering thoughts and feelings, in a structured group. Learning in a circle is most effective when followed by opportunities to practice skills with support in routines and free play situations

Learning Circles can focus on a range of skill areas to suit the needs of the group.

Some examples of Learning Circles include:

- Together Times – short planning and reviewing circles at the beginning and end of each session. Planning circles focus on what is going to happen that day using a visual timetable and helping individuals and small groups of children to make plans for free play. This time is also valuable for reminders about rules and prompts for expectations during the session.
- Review circles focus on recalling things what children did, what happened during the session and talking about how children felt.
- Attention and Listening circle – using a range of short, simple, high interest activities to focus and extend attention and help children learn to listen to each other as well as adults within the setting.
- Language Circle – focused on developing the use and understanding of basic vocabulary and language concepts through activities that involve listening to, responding to and giving simple directions to familiar adults and peers.
- Language circles might also include stories, songs and rhymes. Visual cues to support communication and understanding of language are used.
- Play Circle – bringing structured social play activities,

such as cars, construction, animals, and domestic play situations involving doll play, shopping, teatime, etc to the circle to support development of a broad range of play ideas and to practice related language and skills.

These basic circles start at the level of the group and become more complex as children are able to cope with challenges, leading onto more sophisticated and abstract concepts and introducing new types of learning circles, e.g.

- All about us circle – developing awareness of self and personal attributes as well as awareness and appreciation of others and valuing of differences.
- Social Circle – developing awareness of rules for a range of social situations and skills needed such as sharing, turntaking, communicating and problem solving. Providing structured opportunities to practice skills with a partner and with a small group of children.

The focus of Learning Circles may vary between groups within a setting and will change over time to reflect the needs and interests of the group.

In order to plan effective learning circles, time needs to be allowed in the early stages to establish a format and rules for sessions, and to ensure that targets are set at an appropriate level to allow meaningful involvement and positive experiences for all children in the group. Sessions need to actively engage children in a range of ways. Learning intentions for the group should be simply

stated so that children have an understanding of what it is about, e.g., today we are learning about ... sharing, colours, playing with cars. These can also form part of the review session outlined above, e.g., today we learned about ... being friends.

In some settings, where registration and story time were the only group sessions offered, the introduction of learning circles had a positive impact on how children responded to adults and to each other and improvements were seen in the behaviour of individual children as well as a general improvement in the atmosphere in the setting. Staff with a range of levels of experience and training reported increased confidence in organising and planning circle time sessions. Children enjoyed the circle format and sometimes

asked to do another activity before ending the session. Turntaking skills improved and children were observed to listen more to each other. Where the group sizes were around 6 or 8 children, a feeling of closeness within the group was evident, providing a sense of security and attachment for some children who had previously been isolated within the group. This again had a real impact on relationships with other children and adults for such children. Staff felt that they could see changes taking place within the group day by day and noted that on days when Learning Circles did not take place, particularly at the beginning of the session, the atmosphere was less calm.

It requires a level of skill and commitment on the part of practitioners to effectively run Learning Circles that result in real learning but the results are undoubtedly worth the effort. The key is thorough preparation, planning and organisation. The bonus is that practitioners can develop these skills one step at a time, much as their children do, so they do not need to be experts at the outset but will gradually develop a skilled approach over time - which is what Learning Circles are all about.

Aims:

The development of a Learning Circles approach aimed to:

- support staff in developing confidence to use Learning Circles as part of the day to day routine
- develop opportunities for children to become motivated and competent learners through Learning Circle activities
- develop a view of circle activities as a strategy for promoting learning in a broader range of areas leading
- build structure and progression in small and large group activities
- provide settings with the start of a resource bank of ideas and activities

Activities initiated:

A half day training session was provided in one setting with a focus on:

- setting up Learning Circles – format and organisation
- Learning Circle activities – content with a focus on three main areas: language, play and social skills

Practical considerations were discussed in each setting and a plan was developed for establishing and managing groups.

Learning Circle activities were modelled in settings where staff had no previous experience of a Circle Time approach.

Activities were aimed at two age groups within each setting

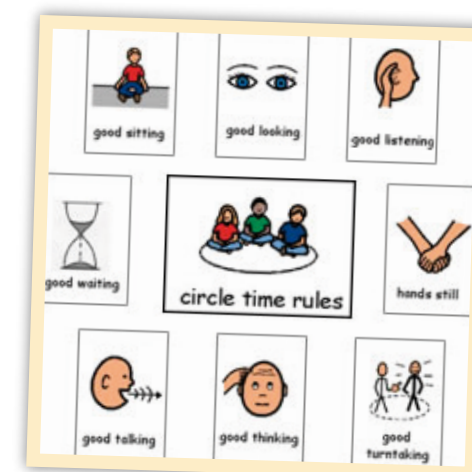
Ideas for a range of activities and some resources were provided for staff to use and develop.

Evaluation – After Learning Circles initiative

- Staff were surprised at how well even their younger group sat for the sessions and took turns. Emphasis on not being asked to say anything at first just to place objects etc,
- Staff experimented with various activities and were pleased with children's responses.
- Nursery sessions were described as generally calmer as children experienced quiet, settled activity.
- Behaviour generally improved as structure introduced
 - free time previously lasting too long was reduced a little
 - there were less children at one time at free play.
- Older children enjoyed activities and were keen to keep session going – some sessions reported to last half an hour with no loss of attention.
- Managing session / activities to allow several small groups in place of two larger groups after observing how much easier to manage.
- Organising one circle time group while other children playing outdoors
- Using staff to support children with additional needs within circle – all staff involved.
- Difficult to find space away from shelves / distractions – using screens
- Need to build up bank of ideas/ resources quite quickly – but staff observed that resources (e.g., instruments, picture cards for games) can be home made and don't have to be expensive. Also considering how to adapt general nursery resources for circle activities

Ideas / tips for others considering similar ventures

- Begin as soon as the group is together
- Have resources to hand so that you do not have to interrupt the activities to fetch something
- Plan for several short sessions rather than one large circle which goes on for a long time
- For younger children sessions need to be shorter and more active
- Have adults sitting around the circle so they can be near children who might need support
- Help children to know and anticipate when Circle Time happens during the session – use a visual timetable to support understanding and readiness.
- Songs and activities should reflect the developmental level of the children in the group
- Plan a varied mix of active and relaxing activities depending on the needs of the group. Include activities that develop skills in a range of areas, e.g., language, social / emotional, cognitive and physical
- Think about how to introduce and establish key skills and concepts
- Make learning objectives clear to children. Comment on what is being learnt in each activity
- If Learning Circles are not successful consider which factors need to be adjusted, e.g.,
 - size of group,
 - number of adults,
 - location of group,
 - length of session
 - level of activities
 - level and nature of support.



Anne-Marie Jones, Area SENCo



Using symbols to promote good behaviour

Theme:

Supporting Innovation and Inclusion in Early Years Settings

Based on Philosophy/Idea:

- Creating a Communication Friendly Environment (CFE)
- SEN Childcare Co-ordinators Behaviour Management Training

Aims and relevant quotes:

- To use visual cues
- To use symbols, objects, pictures and gestures to encourage and support good behaviour in the Race Meadows Kids After School Club. To visually prompt and remind children of the rules and boundaries of the club. To visually support, direct children and enhance desirable behaviour amongst peers.
- 'Everyone understands what they mean, its really helped'

(Rachel Rowntree, Manager)

Useful books/websites:

- Bill Rogers 'Managing Behaviour'
- Ideas to go 'better behaviour'
- www.Incentiveplus.co.uk
- Writing with symbols
- Wigit

Contact details for further information:

Suzanne Everitt (Exhall Base), Harjinder Bahra (Kingsway Base) IDS Teaching & Learning Tel: 01926 418282 or 01926 746860

Setting description:

Race Meadows After School Club is on the site of Race Meadows School, Atherstone. It is registered for after school activities for children 4 to 11 years old. The group was looking for ways to promote good behaviour, lower

noise levels and help children understand the rules and boundaries of the setting.

Activity initiated:

The staff received behaviour management training including discussions on how they could improve their environment making it more communication friendly. Staff went on to adapt their own ideas and create their own symbols and cues.

Resources:

Variety of visual symbols to encourage and support good behaviour

Variety of visual symbols to incorporate rules and boundaries

Ideas and tips for others considering similar venture:

It can be time consuming for all those involved to make resources, access equipment and support implementation. However, it is hugely rewarding to see the benefits of everyone's hard work.

Photos, description of setting following new initiative and/or comments from children, staff, parents.

The environment is communication friendly. The staff are enthusiastic to create and implement their own ideas and report that there has been an improvement in children's behaviour since implementing the cues. I was able to witness staff using the cues which worked effectively. The staff are confident and the children are relaxed. The setting offers quiet areas which they are aware aids children's attentions and listening skills.

Suzanne Everitt & Harjinder Bahra, SEN Childcare Coordinators

NAS EarlyBird Programme

Theme:

The NAS EarlyBird Programme is an early intervention course which supports six families over a three month period as they learn about their child's autism.

The programme combines group training sessions, individual home visits and video feedback to help parents apply what they have learnt.

Based on Philosophy/Idea:-

'Early intervention is essential for children with autism and helps to maximise the achievement of their potential.'

'Parents provide the main developmental context for their pre-school child...'

Parents support and learn from each other whilst being supported by licensed trainers who have an understanding of autism.

Aims:-

1. To support parents in the period between diagnosis and school placement.
2. To empower parents and help them to facilitate their child's social communication and appropriate behaviour within the child's natural environment.
3. To help parents establish good practice in handling their child at an early age so as to pre-empt the development of inappropriate behaviours.

Setting description:

The programme is run county wide: Two hour and a half hour weekly training sessions or home visits.



Resources:



EarlyBird Parent Book
EarlyBird Programme Video
Personal video of child's progress

Approaches used:

Established practice in the field of autism including

- NAS SPELL approach
- Techniques from TEACCH approach
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Parent's comments:

"It gives you a much clearer understanding of your child's autism and you meet other parents in the same circumstances as you."

"We anticipate situations and how problems may be prevented before they occur."

"I know that each behaviour / tantrum etc. has an underlying cause..."



Val Redhead, 0-3 Child Development Adviser

Sound Box

Theme:

Listening skills are necessary for communication and language development.
So developing children's listening skills clearly has a vital role in their learning.
This "Sound Box" activity provides opportunity for careful listening and developing attention and listening skills through game in a fun way.

Knowledge and Concepts:

- Early Learning Goals:
 - Sustain attentive listening
 - Listen with enjoyment and respond to stories, songs, rhymes and poems
- Concepts and other learning:
 - Develop the ability to develop higher and lower sounds

Key vocabulary:

- Sound
- Stop
- Repeat
- Perform
- Start
- Slow
- Fast
- Long
- Short
- Listen
- Loud
- Soft
- High
- Low

Resources:

Story/song/rhyme/poem with opportunities for making sound.
A variety of sound makers made from different materials e.g. metal spoon, plastic bottle, wooden pegs.

Activity:

Listen to the story or learn the words of the song/rhyme/poem.
Talk about the parts of the story/song/rhyme/poem which suggest sound effects.
Go on a sound maker hunt around the setting.
Encourage children to explore their chosen sound maker and be inventive with sounds.
Decide together on the sound makers to be used at different parts of the story/song/ rhyme/poem. Practice the parts where the sound comes. Talk about the key vocabulary words.
Read the story/song/rhyme/poem through again with the sounds played by the children in a performance.
Leave the sound makers in a box in your music corner so that the children can play the game again.
* Groups of children could make up their own Sound Boxes to rhymes, then perform them to each other. Encourage them to listen carefully to and talk about the sound effects using key vocabulary words.



Suzanne Hack, Area SENCo

Acknowledgements

A big thank you to all the children, parents and staff at the following settings for making this publication possible:

- Alveston Cygnets
- Bishop's Tachbrook Pre-School
- Brailes Pre School
- Child's Play
- Exhall Assessment Nursery
- Fledgelings Nursery
- Happy Tykes Pre-School
- Hedgehogs Pre-school
- Kidventure Day Nursery
- Lillington Nursery
- Links Daycare Nursery
- Little Stars Christian Playgroup
- Peter Pan
- Polka Dots
- Race Meadow Kids Club
- Whitnash Methodist Pre-school
- Seedlings
- Shipston Pre School
- St. Matthew's Bloxham Nursery Class
- St. Marie's Day Nursery
- Sunbeams Pre-School
- Tysoe Children's Centre
- Warwick Nursery and Family services
- Windmill Pre School

