



Barbour Nursery School



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Developing children's language skills

Barbour Nursery School is situated in the Hillhall housing estate in the centre of Lisburn and fifty-two children attend on a full-time basis. The school has two full-time teachers, two full-time nursery assistants, one part-time assistant and a special needs assistant for two pupils with pending statements.

This case study focuses on the development of the children's language skills, the priority given to staff development and engaging with parents to effectively support the children's progress.

The most recent inspection was in 2017. Outcomes for learners and the quality of provision were both reported to be very good whilst leadership and management was evaluated as outstanding. Barbour Nursery School was found to have a high level of capacity for sustained improvement.

Language development

In recent years approximately 40% of the pupils have arrived at the school with delayed language skills, such as poor vocabulary acquisition, underdeveloped attention and listening skills and with difficulties in understanding basic instructions. The school has therefore given the development of these skills a high priority.

The school has devised its own language programme following several years of working alongside outreach speech and language therapists at the school. Successful working relationships have also been developed with the Down Lisburn Trust Speech and Language Therapy unit and Sure Start. All staff have completed Hanen, Elklan, ICAN Talk Boost and Early Talk Boost language training.

Staff development

The school has invested in building the capacity of its staff and the training of staff is a priority. As the school operates in a socially disadvantaged area, funding for training has been made available through E1 Lisburn to support the Talk Boost programme.

ICAN Talk Boost requires daily, small group withdrawal from class learning with lessons organised over a nine week period and an internal organisational rotation to facilitate this. The programme can only operate with highly trained staff.

A school and wider community evaluation of the programme has found it to be a very good assessment tool to baseline and track pupils. Engagement with parents is crucial and includes their attendance at an initial seminar and a pupil story book going home every week for parental reinforcement.

The school modifies its own language development provision to support and work alongside this programme.

The school is also involved in the Incredible Years programme and both staff and parents have accessed training and used the programme's methodology. Training has taken place in teacher classroom management with the school availing of the Incredible Years small group and whole class programmes as well as basic parent and school readiness parent programmes.

This is viewed by the school to have been transformational to its whole-school classroom practice with the focus on recognising feelings, dealing with emotions, developing social skills and solving problems paramount.

Positive behaviour management and labelled praise are also promoted through this programme.

Termly parent information sessions are well attended and more intensive weekly Incredible Years parent training sessions are available in partnership with a neighbouring primary school that is also committed to the programme.

There is a considerable time commitment to this programme. The teaching Principal commits to one day a week out of class to lead parent sessions. Fourteen parents have completed the School Readiness programme so far this year and this has resulted in a composite approach to learning and a continuous cycle of professional development.

Building relationships

The success of this programme is based on the development of excellent relationships between the school, parents and the local community.

The school works closely with Largymore Primary School and with external agencies such as Resurgem, Early Intervention Lisburn, Barnardo's and Homestart. This allows the school to share good practice and to target and access specialist support for families in need.

The Principal feels that these community links are essential and she regularly attends community meetings involving other agencies, a Lisburn nursery teachers' cluster group and the Lisburn primary and nursery principals' group.

The school has a high profile in the community and a wide variety of events, trips and MADs (Mum and Dad days), Eco- Schools activities such as spring cleans, painting and gardening

opportunities are open to parents of the school. The school often walks to local facilities, for example, Lisburn library, the Island Arts Centre and Castle Garden to encourage the use of local attractions.

Parents are surveyed twice a year and there is a termly curriculum session which parents are encouraged to attend. Parents are also invited to view classroom learning to encourage the use of the same strategies at home.

The school communicates very well with parents who are informed of their child's learning and events that are happening at the school through weekly news-sheets.

Monthly You and Me Time suggestions include songs and rhymes which prompt further learning at home.

This communication with parents has been further developed through the See Saw app which allows the school to share photographs, information about events and daily learning with parents.

The Principal is of the opinion that this has been very successful in prompting discussion at home and encouraging more parental engagement with pupils' learning.

Summary

Barbour Nursery school's success is very much linked to its commitment to whole staff training and its numerous and varied links with outside agencies for both support and training.

The school has developed as a community school, working alongside parents, neighbouring schools and community groups in a proactive and creative manner.

Its focus on language development has led to improved outcomes for pupils and this, in turn, has motivated all staff to work enthusiastically for continuous improvement.

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