

EYFS – Maintaining Ofsted Outstanding

Silvia Latorraca

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To discuss this case study, please contact us via email customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk



Key Points

- To create an environment where the children make excellent progress as independent, robust learners.
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Purpose

What were your reasons for doing this development work?

We are very proud of our EYFS and want to share our practice with fellow colleagues. As a Camden school, we know that sharing good practice and ideas is key to making improvements and gaining inspiration to use in order to keep raising standards. This enables us to create excellent learning environments and opportunities for our children.

Who were the identified target learners?

Our Nursery comprises of a class teacher, a Nursery Nurse and a Teaching Assistant. We also have a mid-day meals supervisor who works only with Nursery during lunchtime. Our Reception class comprises of one class teacher and a teaching assistant.

There are 26 full time children in Nursery and 30 children in Reception. Mobility in Hampstead is high. Approximately one third of our Nursery children will not be offered a place in Reception class.

We were targeting everyone who works in Early Years Foundation Stage.

What specific curriculum area did you intend to have impact on?

- Our intention is always to look at our curriculum with a holistic approach;
- Enabling children to learn independently is of great importance in our setting;
- We believe that children learn as a whole and not in a fragmented way;
- We plan opportunities and activities that will grab the interests of the children and set them up so they are able to make strong links in their learning.

How were you intending to improve pupil learning?

- We communicate on a daily basis discussing the children needs and how we can best plan for each individual child;

- From our combined observations of the day we plan and create opportunities for children to embed or extend their learning experiences in different areas of the curriculum. This is often done immediately so the impact is not lost;
- Assessment, communication and reflection of what sparks the children's imagination and learning is at the heart of making those activities high quality learning experiences;
- Having a clear understanding of our children as learners.

What were your success criteria?

- Maintaining outstanding grade in Ofsted;
- Increasing percentage of children attaining “good” at end of EYFS;
- Increasing percentage of children making better than expected progress from Nursery point of entry to end of Reception.

Methodology

What did you do - what teaching approaches did you use?

We foster the attitude in our learners that everyone can have a go and succeed. All efforts are praised and the children's achievements are celebrated daily – where the children learn to feel proud of themselves. We also teach the children to feel proud of others' achievements – efforts never go unnoticed! We do this through nominating a 'Special Helper' for the day, who has shown something brilliant recently. We stop mid-session to celebrate as direct praise in the moment is meaningful and most powerful!

We strive to create a rich and stimulating learning experience for all the children every day. We plan our weeks through topics and we always use high quality texts to introduce this to the children as a way in for their learning to begin. We link all areas and activities as much as possible so the children immerse themselves in new experiences. This reaches all the senses and enables them to develop their communication and language, raising their confidence and feeding into all areas of their learning and development. We teach the children lots of games and songs, which link directly to their learning.

In Nursery, we recently used 'Whatever Next' by Jill Murphy to launch us into space. It gave us a great way into thinking about lists and what we would take on our journey; counting the objects for our picnic. We met aliens and wrote them messages, which we sent into space on 'magic stars'. We thought about time and how long it would take us to get to the moon, how long our rocket needed to be, how to fix our spaceship when it crashed, moving like astronauts on the moon – the learning was endless. and so much fun for all of us!

We know children develop different skills and understanding at different paces and we plan for this. We support and encourage children who need a little more time and challenge those with a deeper understanding.

The learning environment needs to be inspiring. Wall displays are creative and engaging and feature images of the children and their learning. The daily set up includes a range of activities. See attached photographs. Also attached is an outline of our daily routine and example of weekly planning. You will notice that our written planning is minimal (it's all in the preparing resources and discussion as a staff). It could all change if the children suddenly share a book or object that grabs everyone's interest.

It is important to:

- Know the children and how they learn;
- Make careful and meaningful observations of the children and planning for their next steps;
- Give importance to the incidental learning that we see happening, this is where the children are truly using and applying knowledge, understanding and skills;
- Have great team work – effective communication between staff; staff and children; staff and parents;
- Notice the little things that make a big difference and acting on them quickly;
- Move the children's learning on at a fast pace ensuring one activity covers many of the 7 areas of learning;
- Be flexible.

The teaching staff are aware that they are modelling behaviours and attitudes to learning all the time. We know that if a child learns how to learn they will become confident, resilient, thoughtful, independent learners, who problem solve and don't give up without trying their best!

What specific teaching resources did you use?

- [2 Build a Profile](#) (Assessment tool): this is an assessment tool, which builds up a profile of the child as a learner it links directly to Development Matters including the characteristics of learning. It gives us a clear picture of where gaps are and which areas we need to target. It also allows us to communicate with parents on a fortnightly basis giving them updates on what their child has been up to at school.
- Recommended EYFS reading materials.
- For ideas and inspiration in the classroom we often use [ABC Does](#) and [Pinterest](#).

What CPD experiences, materials, research and expertise have you drawn on?

Training, observations.

Thomas Coram – EYFS lesson study project.

Outcomes and Impact

What has been the impact on pupil learning?

Children leave our EYFS being confident, independent learners. They have a very smooth transition from home to Nursery to Reception and then to Year 1. They function brilliantly as a group and have built sturdy foundations for the rest of their learning journey.

Adults assess what children can already do and then plan their next steps on a daily basis. As a result all children make at least good and often outstanding progress from their starting points. They are well prepared to continue to make rapid progress in Year 1. (OFSTED 2014)

Evidence of impact on pupil learning

Ofsted November 2014 wrote:

- Children in the early years make phenomenal progress.
- Provision in the early years is outstanding. Children choose from a wide range of stimulating and relevant activities which engage them fully in their learning. The classrooms and the outdoor areas are highly stimulating and organised to enable children to make progress in all areas of learning. In the Nursery there is an excellent emphasis on developing children's personal, language and communication, and physical skills.
- Many children have had previous pre-school experience and are already working within the typical age bands for nursery children. They settle quickly into the classroom routines and are eager and ready to learn. Adults assess what children can already do and then plan their next steps on a daily basis. As a result all children make at least good and often outstanding progress from their starting points. They are well prepared to continue to make rapid progress in Year 1.
- Adults are skilled in moving children's progress on at a fast pace. They observe children carefully and intervene when appropriate to extend their understanding in as many areas of learning as they can. Equally they know when to allow children to

explore on their own, so that the children can sustain their concentration and develop their resilience in order to complete an activity.

- Children play confidently and creatively together. They investigate and explore cooperatively, sharing and taking turns. In the Reception class four children made a boat with large wooden blocks using a picture to guide them. They instructed each other to get on board the boat, informing an adult, 'We are going to sail across the sea to a treasure island', and then helped each other to 'climb' into the boat.
- The learning environment has many labels and printed words to show children that print has meaning. Adults have extended this by using the children's captions to reinforce this as well as celebrating their achievements.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. They are exceptionally well cared for and feel very safe.
- Parents and carers feel welcome and appreciate the daily opportunities to talk to the staff. They receive regular updates about their child's progress and how to help their child at home.
- The early years leader is an excellent role model for all staff. As a skilled teacher she shares her expertise and regularly checks the quality of the provision. She provides focused feedback to improve staff's practice, as well as tailored training and development to secure further improvements. As a result, children's achievement has risen dramatically over the last two years.

What has been the impact on teaching?

- All staff are tuned into the children's learning and interests.
- We approach the planning and assessment as a team and therefore have a greater knowledge and understanding of the children as individuals and a group.
- Staff are confident in planning focus activities and circle times, delivering them at a high quality and making assessments and judgements.

Evidence of impact on teaching

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Ofsted November 2014 graded Leadership and Management as outstanding – see related case study.

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

What would your next steps be?

To maintain our high standards and ensure that new staff joining us have excellent training and support.

Sharing Practice

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where should they start?

- Ensuring that all adults are excellent practitioners and are committed to the well being and development of the children.
- The classroom has to be a rich, stimulating learning environment; where children make relationships, grow in confidence, explore, develop skills and concentration: Home corner, role play area, water and sand tray, modelling table, investigation area, maths area, writing area, reading corner, messy area, art area, construction area. Outside should reflect the learning inside but on a messier, larger, louder scale.
- Teach lots of objectives through interactive, tactile games and songs; repeat these often to embed learning.
- Choose high quality texts to teach from that give opportunities for high standards in learning.

You are very welcome to come and visit us in action – why not drop me a line:
s.latorraca@fitzjohns.camden.sch.uk

What would be the essential elements to include?

Look at the topics, books, activities you are using/setting up – do they look like fun? Do they grab you? Do you want to play, explore with them for extended periods?

If not...start again...the children probably won't be excited either!