

Setting: Nursery Times at the Park – South Lanarkshire

Type: Meeting sensory needs / supporting transitions

Nursery Times at the Park is a private nursery, operated in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council. It provides care for children from six weeks to five years of age or until they attend school. The nursery is registered to care for up to 89 children. This includes 24 children under the age of two and 65 over the age of two.

Inclusion and diversity are at the heart of the setting, which prides itself on its nurturing ethos while also fostering an environment for learning.

“We have strong, positive relationships with our families and outside agencies and work together to ensure the best outcomes for our children,” says manager Louise Stirling.



Staff want children at the nursery to feel happy and secure

The challenge

Because of its priorities and its awareness and promotion of children’s rights, the staff at Nursery Times at the Park are always looking for ways that they can bridge the attainment gap and allow all children access to the curriculum.

To be able to deliver on these aims, they wanted to buy additional resources and equipment that would allow all their children to access their rights and the full curriculum in a way that they can understand. The resources would also help the staff in the nursery to deliver the curriculum and not only help further the children’s learning but also foster their wellbeing. Some of the resources requested would also help the children relax and feel secure when at nursery. For some children, the nursery day can be long and busy and having these resources to enhance the calm spaces would help children feel calm, happy and receptive to learning.

What the money went on

With the funding from the ELC Inclusion Fund, staff bought a wide array of communication resources and interactive play equipment to distribute across the four ‘rooms’ in the nursery setting. This included ‘Now and Then’ recordable talking wall panel, recordable talking briefcase, giant illuminated mark-making board, recordable photo album, sensory dark den with accessories, padded vinyl shape mirrors, clickety speech booster book and toy sacks, tactile vibration sensory starter tub, wooden mirror table and a creative pop-up tent.



Children enjoy the sensory dark den

Impact

Staff were able to appreciate very quickly the positive impact that the new resources were having within the setting, reporting how they enhanced a calm, safe and stimulating environment for the children.

Louise says that because of the range in these new resources, staff are able to appreciate development across a number of key areas;

“The sensory dark dens have offered a cosy space that helps stimulate the children’s sensory needs, especially after the re-opening due to the closure of Covid where we have found that some children with



ASN have needed a little more support. The communication resources that we ordered have had a very positive impact in speech and language development.



“Staff have been spending more one-to-one time using these resources to help children further develop their skills. The 'Now and Then Communication' resource has helped children have more of an understanding of what is happening now and what is going to happen next.

“This has proved really effective with the children's routines as some of them have lapsed throughout lockdown, so this is helping them get back into their nursery routine. The recordable photo album has also helped when using family members to ease the transition back into nursery after their time away during lockdown.”

“The tactile resources supported the children who have sensory issues and helped them achieve a level of calm which in turn enabled them to participate more in the nursery routine. The emotional resources supported a wide range of children who had communication difficulties. These allowed the children to express themselves in a non-verbal way and ensure staff were able to assess and meet their emotional needs.

“All the resources from the fund have had a very positive effect on the quality of care and learning the nursery is able to provide for all our children, helping to make our service inclusive for all.”



Evaluation

The nursery evaluated the impact of the new resources through observation and the learning journal trackers. Staff were able to see improvement in children achieving their personal targets and through observations witnessed how the resources had supported this development.

Louise is also very pleased to report that the awards received from the ELC Inclusion Fund have had a positive impact on the nursery's quality of learning. The resources secured have contributed to assisting the staff in their implementation of the curriculum and how they are able to support the children's needs.

The nursery staff have given detailed feedback on how the new resources have supported them in their work, with one team member commenting: “Before the tactile resources were awarded we found it more challenging to support our children when they were feeling anxious. After receiving these we were able to create calmer areas within the playroom. This resulted in our children being in a calm place when exposed to learning experiences, ensuring they were able to fully participate in the learning offered.”



The nursery supports access to the curriculum in an inclusive environment



Lessons learned

Louise feels the process of applying for and securing awards from the fund has allowed the team to reflect on how they can adapt their provision to raise attainment and allow all children to engage with the full curriculum. “We've learned the importance of adaptation whilst allowing the children to access the curriculum in an inclusive environment. We work hard to ensure all children are given the opportunity to join in with all aspects of the nursery day and the fund has provided us with some of the tools to allow us to do this.”

Next steps

Nursery Times at the Park will continue to develop its provision of emotional literacy for children with ASN.

