

# BA (Hons) Childhood Practice

## Working in an Early Education and Childcare Setting

Demonstrating how appropriate skills can be used to create a nurturing and stimulating learning environment in a childcare setting

In this essay, I will identify and demonstrate how I use appropriate skills and knowledge to create a nurturing and stimulating learning environment. I include examples from my practice and refer to evidence to verify my practice. I recognise and understand that in my role as manager, I need to employ a range of skills to create a shared vision and promote and ensure an ethos of equality and inclusion that includes all parents, children, and staff. This is reflected in various policy documents which meet all current local and national requirements (appendix 1) and reported in inspection reports (see appendix 2)

My priority as manager is to establish and maintain a caring, supportive ethos and environment where parents, children, and staff as well as other visiting professionals are welcomed and valued as individuals. Developing positive relationships with parents as well as children is essential to the running of the nursery. Standard 1 of the National Care Standards stipulates that "Each child or young person will be welcomed and valued as an individual" and "Parents and carers and children and young people have the opportunity to visit the service before using it" To support this aim, all children and parents are invited to attend one session of their choosing once a week for the term before their child begins nursery (See Appendix 3). This allows parents and staff to build up relationships in an informal manner. It allows the child to be introduced to the setting with the security of a parent/carer being present and allows both to see how the nursery is run and thus develop confidence in the setting and the staff. It also means that if a difficulty arises, because strong relationships have already been formed, then parents are more willing to share information and staff are more confident in broaching issues and difficulties children may be experiencing. Staff have time to discuss with parents/carers parents their children's likes/dislikes/interests or any concerns that they may have or any special arrangements that may be required. Staff have found that parents may disclose information that otherwise they wouldn't share at all or would take a lot longer for staff to find out. The parents can see the staff in action and so can see

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how the children are treated, see how we discipline the children and how we relate to them and to each other as well as other parents. They become familiar with the nursery routines and have a better understanding of what happens in nursery on a daily basis. We take the opportunity to introduce planning documents and discuss with parents how we individualise our planning to take account of children's interests and stage of development. Furthermore, the nursery operates an "open door " policy and parents/carers are welcome to stay at any time and because they have been welcomed at the induction period, they are more confident in deciding that they want to stay for a visit or contribute to or suggest an activity.

I ensure that staff, including myself, regularly undertakes training to allow them to further develop their knowledge and to learn specific skills to enable them to support individual children. Recent training has included Makaton signing. To support an individual child and to promote an inclusive environment, staff members learned to sign themselves and taught the nursery children and interested parents and other professionals. This proved to be popular with the nursery children and as a result, I formed an after school signing club which is very well attended by both nursery and school children and serves to further promote an inclusive ethos. The practice of using Makaton has now become embedded within the nursery routines and will continue irrespective whether we have any children with a particular communication difficulty. The nursery received an "excellent" rating during their Care Commission inspection in June 2009 for their work in providing an inclusive environment (see Appendix 2). Staff have also gained Level 1 accreditation as a centre for excellence for speech and language development and are currently working towards an enhanced level

It is important that I am a positive role model to other staff members as well as the children and parents. Rodd (1998: 14) discusses the essential characteristics of leaders in the early years settings. She suggests that curiosity, candour, courtesy, courage and compassion are all necessary requirements for effective leadership. Whalley (2011: 141) discusses the difference between leading and managing a service. She explains that leadership is concerned with direction, vision, goals, objectives and inspiring others and thus achieving higher levels of performance than would otherwise be possible. She then goes on to discuss how a manager is concerned with the day to day running of the nursery, planning, and making decisions, organizing work roles and clarifying roles. However, my role is a mixture of the two and I agree with Whalley when she states

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that the two roles are simultaneous and cannot be separated. I have to be capable of inspiring and motivating staff, ensure team working methods, keep up to date with current theory and practice to enable my setting to deliver the best possible service to our children and parents. In conjunction with other staff members, I must ensure that the needs of all the children are being met and take appropriate action to ensure that is the case. In my work setting, all staff have received appropriate training and qualifications and have developed the necessary skills which enables them to understand and support children in their play and learning. They understand the importance of play in children's learning and development and can use this expertise to provide a stimulating environment that takes account of individual needs, interests and stages of development.

Fisher (2008: 3) discusses how children's basic need for love and security, for new experiences for praise and recognition and for responsibility must be met by a caring adult if children are to thrive and make the most of their developmental opportunities. I ensure that these needs are met by sensitive interaction and active listening to children and parents. Children are involved in their own planning on a daily basis and have input into formulating the daily/weekly plans and choosing which resources and materials are made available. (See Appendix 3) Mind maps and floor books are used to record and extend the children's learning and planning. Parents/carers are given a copy of the weekly plans with planned learning explained but are regularly invited to contribute any expertise or resources that they may be willing to share. (See Appendix 4 ) Parents are also encouraged to discuss their child's interests and learning whilst at home and these are incorporated into the nursery planning. I encourage staff to be responsive to children's interests and have no hesitation in changing plans or activities to support and develop those interests. Children are encouraged to plan their own learning and to assess their own next steps. Following the guidance contained within "Curriculum for Excellence" and in conjunction with the "My Learning Journey" planning documents we aim to encourage children's holistic development across the key areas of:

Health and Wellbeing

Literacy and English Numeracy  
and Maths Expressive Arts

Science

Technologies

Social Subjects

## Task 1 (10 credits)

### Religious and Moral Education

In order to deliver these aims and for me to be effective and efficient, I must be able to be able to translate theory into my practice and then ensure that all staff in turn understand the theory so that they may also embed that into their practice. I must be able to evaluate my own work as well as that of the staff in order to continue to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children. Using self- evaluation documents such as "Child at the Centre 2"(2007) and the National Care Standards, I am able to reflect on my practice and review routines and self -evaluate the provision, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses and putting action in place when needed. I also need to comply with statutory requirements and in accordance with the Scottish Social Services Council and the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) I keep up to date with changes and requirements within my sector. My undertaking to study for a BA Childhood Practice is testament to that commitment.

Task 1 (10 credits)

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Policy Documents

Appendix 2 Care Inspectorate Inspection Report and HMIE Inspection Report

Appendix 3 Invitation to attend induction visits

Appendix 4 Example of Child's daily plan and weekly plan and Overview

## **References**

Curriculum for Excellence - Early Years - Fife Direct

Can be accessed at [www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=page...](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=page...)

Fisher, J, (2008) Starting from the Child (third edition) Open University Press, Maidenhead. 2008

Scottish Executive (2005) National Care Standards: early education and childcare up to the age of 16. Edinburgh: Stationary Office Bookshop: Scottish Executive Scotland. HM Inspectorate of Education (2007) The Child at the Centre 2: Self evaluation in the early years.. Scotland . Livingston: HMIE

Whalley, M.E. (2011) "Leading and Managing in the Early Years". In

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