

Inclusion Support Services Project – Louise Oland

Our focus

The focus of this project was to understand children’s experiences of early years education and the support they receive, by hearing directly from them. For example, the project explored how children feel about their daily routines, the activities they enjoy, the people who help them, and what makes them feel happy, safe, or included in their setting.

This information was collected by the co-production officers, who visited the children in their early year’s settings. The children had a range of additional needs, including speech and language delays, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), non-speaking communication, and requirements for additional support. Feedback was primarily gathered through observations of body language, vocalisations, and facial expressions, alongside some verbal responses.

Setting 1



Observations/feedback child 1

- They received 1:1 support to access provision and to help with self-regulation.
- When using the communication grid, the child selected numbers and colours, showing clear enjoyment and engagement with these activities.
- On arrival, the child was exploring colours and letters, reflecting his interests and demonstrating that he can make choices about the activities he wishes to engage in.
- He clicked on the symbol for “teacher” and smiled, suggesting a positive and trusting relationship with his teacher.
- The child used the emotion symbol mat and pointed to “happy,” indicating his positive emotional state.
- He sat at the table and engaged with the session for approximately 25 minutes. His body language appeared relaxed, and his facial expressions, including smiling and vocalising happy sounds, suggested he was content and enjoying the interaction. He also displayed excitement through hand stimming, which appeared to be a self-regulatory and expressive behaviour.
- During the observation, the child did not engage with any other children

- The teacher mentioned that they use symbols/visuals to support communication and understanding

Observations/feedback child 2

- They received 1:1 support to access provision and to help with self-regulation.
- They seemed to flit around the provision, exploring activities for short bursts of time.
- They displayed some behaviours that seemed to indicate they were upset at times e.g. making sad vocalisations, crying, seeking comfort from a familiar adult.
- When upset they seemed to have a secure adult they could seek out for comfort, showing a trusting relationship with this adult
- They communicated their needs through their vocalisations, body language and expressions
- They were able to choose what they wanted to explore and play with
- They briefly pressed the sound button to indicate they wanted more of an interaction with a toy alongside an adult
- The teacher mentioned that they use objects of reference with the child to communicate with them and support their understanding.

Observations/feedback child 3 & 4

- They were being supported by 1 adult (2 children:1 adult)
- They were smiling and laughing with the familiar adult indicating a trusting relationship
- One of the children pointed to happy and excited on the symbol mat to communicate his feelings
- One of the children was able to use the communication mat to take it in turns to build a tower, pointing to the symbol 'my turn' when it was his turn
- They played together with the adult and with the co-production officers

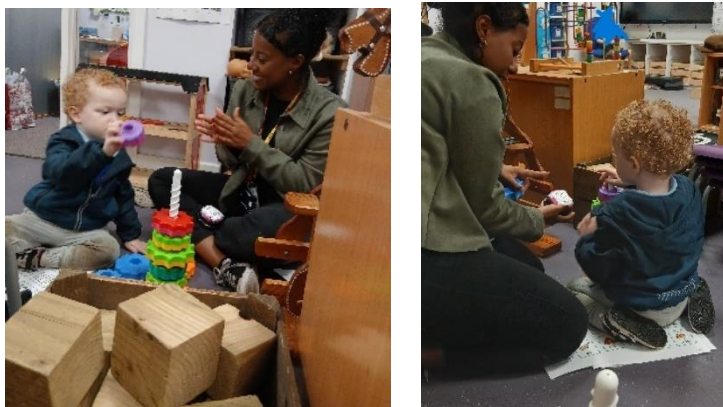
Setting 2



Observations / feedback

- Children seemed happy and regulated when observing their body language, facial expressions and vocalisations.
- The group had a maximum of 6 children with a high number of staff members to support this group
- During a feelings activity – majority of the children pointed to happy indicating they are happy to be in the setting
- Children were able to choose what they wanted to play and engage with
- The environment was rich in communication with the use of sounds buttons, visuals, symbols, signing, therefore children were able to access different methods of communication. We witnessed the children using these aids, indicating the consistent use of these.
- The session was structured with circle times and small group activities, and the children seemed to follow the routine indicating the routine is embedded within the setting
- Some children were playing alongside each other and some playing with (building a tower together)

Setting 3



Observations/feedback child 1 – reception child

- The child was playing with another child and alongside other children when we arrived. During the session the child engaged with a range of children
- The child was able to use the emotion symbol mat and pointed to happy to indicate how he was feeling at school
- The child also used some language to explain their feelings saying ‘friends, happy, dinosaurs, trains’
- The child had a basket of ‘comfort’ objects that they carried around with them. Teaching staff had mentioned this basket was introduced as a no touch basket by others so the child could take ownership of the toys inside to help them regulate their anxiety needs.
- Within the classroom there was a quiet sensory space that children could access when they needed it. The child accessed this space when they started to indicate being upset. They took themselves in for 5 minutes and came back and seemed visibly regulated
- The child seemed to follow the routine indicating the routine is embedded
- The child also had access to a now and next board to support transitions

Observations/feedback child 2 – nursery child

- They received 1:1 support to access provision and to help with self-regulation.
- They seemed to flit around the provision, exploring activities for short bursts of time.
- They displayed some behaviours that seemed to indicate they were upset at times e.g. making sad vocalisations, crying, seeking comfort from a familiar adult. They also pointed to the symbol sad.
- When upset they seemed to have a secure adult they could seek out for comfort, showing a trusting relationship with this adult
- They communicated their needs through their vocalisations, body language and expressions
- They were able to choose what they wanted to explore and play with
- He was able to briefly press the button to indicate he wanted more of an interaction with a toy alongside an adult

- The teacher mentioned that they use objects of reference with the child to communicate with them and support their understanding.

Hollymount



Observations/feedback child 1

- They pointed to happy and excited on the communication mat
- They were smiling, laughing indicating they were feeling happy and regulated
- They were able to freely choose what they wanted to play with
- He was able to take adults by the hand when he wanted something or needed help.

Observations/feedback child 2

- They smiled when the co-production officer approached them
- They were able to freely choose what they wanted to play with
- When they become upset, they sought a familiar adult, and the adult was able to soothe them by singing nursery rhymes – which shows a trusting relationship
- Objects of reference were used to support understanding
- The child became upset and wanted to go back into the room they had recently transitioned from, this was accepted and the child calmed being back in a place of comfort
- The child used their emotions to indicate their needs e.g. crying at the door to indicate going into the next room
- The child enjoyed looking at themselves and smiled when the camera was pointing at them, indicating they were maybe feeling happy

Observations/feedback child 3

- They were able to freely choose what they wanted to play with
- Objects of reference were used to support understanding
- The child used their emotions to indicate their needs e.g. making upset vocalisations by the door to indicate he wanted to go outside
- The child enjoyed pressing the 'more' sound button and engaging with the adult for short periods of time in games of his own choosing