

DCSF Quality case study

Madresfield Early Years Centre, Malvern, Worcestershire

Background

Madresfield Early Years Centre (MEYC) was established in 1994 and occupies part of the 200 acre Hayswood Farm in the village of Madresfield. MEYC is registered for 188 children and provides a range of care and education including a private infant department. It has also delivered services as part of Worcestershire children's centre network.

Babies are cared for in a purpose built Baby Care Lodge opened in April 2007 also provided is daycare (minimum 7 hours daily) for children under three years of age between the hours of 8am and 6 pm. A crèche for children under three years operates between 8am and 4pm daily. The nursery for children aged 3 – 4 years with a minimum three hour session condition and a pre school for rising four and five year olds are open from 8am to 6pm.

The infant department for children up to seven years of age opens from 8.30 am to 3.15 pm term-time only. An extension range of clubs and activities are also offered throughout the day, for parents and toddlers, and during evenings and weekends for older children and adults.

MEYC has a total of 72 staff with each department having a management team of at least two senior staff. The importance of recruiting and retaining high quality staff is one of the keys to the continuing success of MEYC. 14 of the staff are graduates and the owner and centre head (a teacher) has achieved her EYPS in January 08. Three additional staff are currently completing their EYPS with one holding the integrated leadership centre qualification. With a strong emphasis on the outdoors a team of staff are qualified Forest leaders and assistants.

MEYC has been consistently awarded outstanding ratings by OfSTED.

Quality

The MEYC ethos for providing high quality care and education has a number of strands with a highly motivated staff team at its centre with individuals that in the words of Mrs Bennett the owner and centre head "believe in childhood" and are able to work as a team, embrace change, thrive on innovation and see their work as a vocation.

Significant effort is paid to staff induction and regular appraisal with staff at all levels agreeing personal empowerment plans. The underlying philosophy is to empower staff as much as possible in their individual roles. Each member of staff has a mentor to support them in all aspects of their work and professional development. Departmental meetings discuss areas of weakness and strength and agree improvement plans.

Practice centres on respecting the child and the child's needs with a commitment to parental involvement. A calendar of events each term invites parents to participate.

The centre head has been able to observe and incorporate practice from a number of other countries and places great emphasis on this approach in improving the quality of care and education at MEYC. MEYC has been involved in developing nurseries abroad and staff are able to visit these nurseries and bring back their experiences to MEYC.

Drama is used as an essential tool in training staff with role play featuring in training about EYFS and child protection amongst other topics. Training has underlined the importance of "happiness" for both staff and child well-being. MEYC devises much of its own training with senior staff planning and delivering it.

The role played by the MEYC administrative support staff is also important and having an extremely four administrative team enables managers and staff to focus on their core activities.

Recruiting and retaining high quality staff has already been mentioned but this does underpin the quality of care and education provided by MEYC. MEYC has a low staff turnover and seeks to reward and recognise staff in a variety of ways.

The importance of well designed and spacious facilities is seen as a key contributor to quality provision. The buildings and outdoor facilities have been carefully and innovatively designed to serve the needs of children. Design features include indoor sandpits, two story fun dens, sensory areas and an amazing array of outdoor facilities.

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