

DSCF / NDNA Quality Case study

The Wishing Tree Nursery, Brighton, East Sussex

Background

The Wishing Tree Children's Nursery opened in June 2004 and is a private setting owned by Lewis and Jayne Wood. It operates from a converted detached house in the northern suburbs of Brighton and it is registered with Ofsted for 78 children aged three months to five years. Currently the nursery caters for 140 children, which means that on most days it achieves an occupancy of 95%.

The setting is open weekdays from 8am to 6pm all year. There is a staff team of 45, 22 full time and 23 part-time. All full time staff have appropriate childcare qualifications, with the majority being qualified to Level 3 or above. The nursery is run by a manager, two deputies, an office manager and the proprietors.

Development

In October 2008, the setting achieved an 'outstanding' inspection result from Ofsted. It was the first in the area to achieve this standard under the new EYFS framework. A previous inspection gave the setting a rating of a mixture of 'outstanding' and 'good', but the aim from the very start was to achieve a level of 'outstanding' across all areas of the nursery.

Quality

What became obvious to the proprietors within a short time of opening was that the days of high demand and low supply were gone. In order to survive in the childcare market settings have to be constantly striving for excellence.

Consequently in 2005, the nursery joined the local authority's quality assurance scheme, QuILT (Quality Improvement in Learning and Teaching). This is a rolling three year programme covering all key areas of the nursery operation such as staffing, planning, teaching strategies, curriculum, premises, aims and objectives, equal opportunities and much more.

According to proprietor Lewis Wood, "QuILT enables us to focus on the detail which we feel is fundamental to achieving high standards and at the same time is crucial in allowing staff to reflect on and implement best practice."

The proprietors feel very strongly that a major reason for the nursery receiving the 'outstanding' rating from Ofsted is the loyalty of the settings staff team and that it is essential that individuals receive satisfactory reward for their work. This is the biggest threat to the maintenance of high standards as lack of appropriate staff rewards inevitably leads to higher staff turnover.

In the words of Mr Wood, “fundamentally, I believe our success can be attributed to four things, firstly, retaining key staff with realistic pay, targeted training, a clear career path, plus regular champagne and chocolates; Secondly, focussing on quality and attention to detail and thirdly, continuous investment in premises, equipment and outdoor areas; and, finally, nurturing parent and carer confidence and participation.”

Context

The Wishing Tree Nursery is situated in the Patcham ward of Brighton. Although the ward is classified as a Lower Level Super Output Area for the purposes of the Government's Deprivation Index, the postcode area in which the setting is situated is not significantly deprived according to the Government's Indices of Deprivation 2007.

Nursery Details

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