

DSCF / NDNA Quality Case Study

Phoenix Day Nursery, Brentwood, Essex

Background

Phoenix Day Nursery is a privately run business established in 2001 and is registered for 81 children. Located in Brentwood, Essex, in a commuter belt for the City of London, Phoenix provides a total childcare service for 0-5 year olds from 7.45am - 5.45pm, five days per week.

Developments

Responding to the local market, Phoenix prides itself on continued investment, both in its business and its staff. The management team of the nursery are all qualified at Level 3 and above, with staff recently given opportunities funded by the Transformation Fund and the Graduate Leader Fund, to further enhance their qualifications.

Key to the success of Phoenix has been its recognition of the necessity to provide choice and flexibility for parents, as a key response to changing patterns of work of many of the community.

As the owner of the nursery states, “we operate a democratic model of management, in which we listen to the team and allow time for reflective practice. We have taken this a stage further by encouraging our staff to build in time for preparation, with non contact time. This has proved great in regard to staff retention.”

Phoenix values strong partnership working with its local authority through involvement on the single funding formula steering group, which is currently exploring fairer ways of funding for the free entitlement. In addition, the nursery values and sees business benefits in networking resulting in a continuing dialogue with other day nurseries, the local authority and national childcare organisations. Through active local marketing and promotion, Phoenix has been able to remain sustainable, coupled by a buyout market and a cocktail of funding streams supporting the business. By adopting a business back to business approach, the nursery has taken the forward thinking stance of using local suppliers, such as the local farm shop, butcher and construction companies.

Awarded Investors in People, and then in 2008 awarded the NDNA Day Nursery of the Year award for central England, Phoenix constantly strives for a better environment for its staff to work in. It operates an open door policy for staff, with monthly staff meetings for the whole team and once a fortnight meetings for the base room teams. Staff are always encouraged to attend ongoing training, as the nursery can see the clear return on investment it receives by returning enthused staff. Attendance of staff at training can be problematic for many day nurseries, but Phoenix has invested in additional staff a sort of internal staff bank’, so covering ratios and allowing staff to attend training without incurring the heavy costs from a supply agency, although this does have an effect upon

the nursery's profits.

Retention of staff at Phoenix is above average, supported by a mixture of incentives for staff, exclusive of the training and CPD opportunities. Additional holidays are offered to staff after five years services, while the whole staff team receive bi-annual pay increases, firstly through the increase in fees, and secondly through an internal pay scale. This way staff can see a progression and a ladder of career development.

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