22 September 2008

Mrs M Farrow
Headteacher
Rebecca Cheetham Children's Centre
Marcus Street
London
E15 3JT

Dear Mrs Farrow

Ofsted survey: good practice in capturing the user voice

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with my colleague Annette Stanger on 17 September 2008 to look at work on capturing the user voice.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: observations of activities, discussions with children, staff and parents and scrutiny of records and documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- The strong ethos for the children's centre places the child's needs, wishes and views at the heart of all activities. It contributes strongly to the development of children's self-esteem, independence and confident relationships with each other and adults. Children arrive at the centre achieving at below expected levels for their age, they make good progress and achieve expected levels in most areas of learning by the time that they leave.
- Children are all encouraged to be very actively involved in making decisions and choices about their own work and activities. These include key decisions about life and provision in the centre, for example playground design, purchase of resources and rules on behaviour around the school.
- These strategies to engage children as users are well embedded throughout the work of the centre within the high quality Early Years and Foundation Stage practice.
- Planning for each group of children takes account of their preferences, as observed by staff, and informs the main activities for the week.
- A range of strategies engage children directly in the review of their learning and development, including child conferencing and child consultation week.

- Parental partnership and engagement are excellent, supporting a shared holistic view of the child and ensuring that any issues and concerns are identified early. Parents and carers report that staff know their child well. They say that they are well supported by the strong key worker system, good communication strategies and the 'hands-on' family learning courses and support.
- Photos and video are used routinely to capture children's behaviours and progress and to support dialogue and communication with parents and relevant professionals. This technology supports staff in developing their understanding of and response to the wishes and preferences of young children, especially those with special needs and communication difficulties.
- The inclusive environment ensures that the voices of all groups of children are heard and acted on. Examples of good practice include the recently refined assessment tool for children with English as an additional language, good examples of home-school journals which support the parent/carer and key worker in discussing key areas of focus for individual children, and booklets 'About Me' to support transition to primary education.
- The headteacher and staff are self-critical and well aware of strengths and areas for further development; there are many examples of systematic evaluation of activities and initiatives, informed by children's views.

Areas for development

- Seek opportunities to involve children more formally in the structured planning and evaluation of activities.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the user voice in the children's centre.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mary Ryan
Her Majesty's Inspector