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Ms M James
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Ms James

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 on 10 March 2009 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 sessions, discussions with children and parents or carers, discussions with staff from the centre and those from partner agencies and scrutiny of documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- All staff share the centre's vision to fully include children in their learning and put this into practice. The strategic planning, processes and structures of the centre are closely focused on enabling children to make a positive contribution to the community. Responding to children's ideas, views and preferences is central to the centre's daily work.
- Staff carry out close observations of children's patterns of behaviour and act upon their findings to boost children's learning. They listen to children's voice and support them in expressing their theories about life, helping them to communicate, represent and divulge their preferences. This enables children to be confident contributors to what happens each day.
- Individual planning for each child is built up from information gained from observations and what children tell the adults. The staff are skilled at giving children the time and space to make choices and trust them to make decisions. Consequently, children are active participants in shaping their learning. Adults understand the need to react spontaneously and extend children's learning in meaningful ways that follow children's interests.
- Resources are readily available to children so that they become autonomous and independent in selecting these to support their ideas for play.

- The staff forge strong links with parents and give good guidance on how they can support children's learning. Each child's record of achievement is shared with parents so that they can contribute to future planning. Parents' views are sought effectively and used to improve provision, for example in providing a fortnightly 'Dads' Club' on Saturday mornings as well as a wide range of family workshops. Parents' views are also gathered about particular interests that children demonstrate at home, so that these can be built into learning activities at the centre.
- The centre's close liaison with a wide range of outside agencies and health professionals enables a rapid response to the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families.

Areas for development

- Record more consistently the outcomes of children's talk about their learning and use their views to inform the next steps.

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

As I explained previously, 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

Barbara Crane
Additional Inspector