

Tilery Primary School Visit 13 July 2016

Attendees: Cllr Grainge, Peter Mennear

Contact: Julia Robinson, Early Years and Foundation Stage Team Leader

Tilery is the first school in the Borough to provide for 2 year olds. The school has benefitted from capital funding to remodel its Early Years building, which is separate from the rest of the school. Sessions can be mixed, with 2 and 3 year olds in same group.

Tilery has close links with the Star Children's Centre, and this enables the school to makes links when children from families are accessing both.

Early Years Pupil Premium (PP) has enabled the school to sponsor two children into full time early years provision (these have additional needs identified).

Staff believe there is a strong community feel in the area, with parents wanting the best for their children, but needing support to help them achieve that. Almost all children entering services at Tilery are behind the level of development where they should be at for their age. At age 5, 40% had reached a Good Level of Development.

Tilery feels that it has a good relationship with the local community and this should ensure good take up of the childcare offer from local families. Staff have seen a noticeable difference between the 2 and 3 year olds, and as cohorts of children move through 2 year old provision into school, staff will be able to monitor the impact on outcomes.

The school regularly accepts asylum seeker and refugee children. Children may only be with the school for a relatively short period of time before being moved on. They often require intensive support, and a recent example was provided of Syrian children. Early years staff needed to gradually extend the length of sessions provided to these, and socialisation was particularly important. The school needed to provide language support.

Funding for the 2 year old offer is calculated and paid on a termly basis, whereas 3 year funding is set annually and is less than the 2 year funding. 2 and 3 year childcare rates were set locally. Pupil Premium rates are set nationally. It was stated that the school runs its Early Years services at a loss but choose to invest in them.

There is a garden area and Little Sprouts CIC provide services on site. The school staff have established a Food Group to see what projects can be undertaken to improve awareness of good food, including education of parents.

There is a school-run holiday club (with some PP funded places), which provides food, and food poverty during holiday periods is a recognised issue. The school also runs a breakfast club.

The school often works directly with parents through Early Help meetings, and Pupil Premium helps fund two Pupil and Family Support workers who work closely on Children in Need and Child Protection issues. There are at least one Early Help meeting per day.

An identified issue is that children lack resilience to overcome setbacks, and a large part of the school's efforts are based on social support and raising aspirations. This is throughout the school and has included taking years 5-6 to Oxford University and other trips. The Tilery Passport enables pupils to track their progress across a range of key skills eg. by end of key stage 2 pupils can demonstrate they are able to cook a meal.

The school has a programme of activities which parents are asked to contribute to at a cost of £5 per term which enables a mix of trips, activities and play activity.

Across the school there are a high proportion of children eligible for Pupil Premium. The school uses this to undertake activities including:

- Teaching Assistants (Tilery aims to have a high proportion, including in Early Years)
- mentors to tackle issues such as attachment
- visits (both nationally and locally to increase knowledge of local area)
- sporting activity and visits which is particularly important to local children
- breakfast and holiday clubs
- sponsored places
- cooking and food activities.

Some of this activity is also funded via contributions for example, but PP was seen as key, particularly to ensure a high level of staffing.

To enable further access to the 30 hour entitlement for three year olds, it would be likely that further investment on the site would be needed. However this would be beneficial if the school could work with parents to improve the number of people working in the local community.

Star Centre Visit 13 July 2016

Attendees: Cllr O'Donnell, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Walmsley, Peter Mennear

Contact: Laura Provett, Big Life Children's Centre Manager

Star Centre in Bath Lane is a children centre commissioned by the Council and provided by the Big Life company. There were 1100 under 5s in the Star Centre Catchment area.

The Centre focusses on school readiness, improving the 2 year offer uptake, parenting, and employability. Some outreach and parenting activities are provided in the home. The area served by the Star Centre faced a number of challenges. The Centres were a resource for local parents and were available on an open access basis, to help with issues such as low mood. Big Life was involved in a number of safeguarding cases and attended the relevant conferences.

The programme has a range of activities open to all – the What's On programme, and more targeted activities. The Centre generally encourages activities where the parent and child can be together.

Parenting activities are supported by a dedicated parenting post. Ante-natal nurturing takes place with referrals from midwives, social workers, and self-referrals. Often staff feel that referrals are too late but ante-natal care was seen as important as a bad ante-natal experience could affect parenting, and parents own childhood could affect how they parented.

Behaviour classes called '123 Magic' were provided and parents often attended as a couple.

Other activities include Home Safety Courses, Toilet Training, Weaning, and Early bird Groups which were for people very early in their pregnancy and gave general advice and key tests.

School readiness activity was focussed on understanding that children from an early age needed to experience and achieve, and that this needed to be followed up by praise and reinforcement of good behaviour. This included reinforcing benefits of ante-natal socialisation.

The Stay and Play activities were discussed as an example. This included messy play, and familiarisation with books which were not always present in the home. The Bookstart Trust provided free books as part of their scheme linked to Star Centre. Children took part in rhyming and singing exercises, and important routines such as sitting in a circle for reading time were introduced.

The 2 year Childcare provision was provided by nurseries at Big Life Centres at Frederick Natrass, Newtown, and Ragworth.

Big Life hosted the **Fairer Start Community Champion Volunteer** programme. Volunteers came from a variety of sources including refugees and trainee GPs.

A quarterly report on volunteering activity was available. Some of this activity was focussed on improving take up on the 2 Year childcare offer. It was agreed that it would be useful to hear from the Community Champion Volunteers at a future meeting.

Stay and Play sessions were held adjacent to Health Visitor sessions in order to encourage greater turnout at the latter. Staff at Big Life had identified that attendance at Health Visitor sessions was particularly low in the Town Centre area compared to the other Centres it operates at (Newtown and Frederick Natrass). There was a marked reluctance to attend from some parents, but the actual reasons were not verbalised. A session had been held at Tilery School but this had not had a major effect.

Portage sessions took place where children with additional needs had been identified before school. These were for any type of need for example global delay, cerebral palsy, but where it was not possible to see what the effect would be on the options for schooling. These sessions consisted of tasks broken down into a series of small steps, to try and get some level of achievement.