

Smart Start Project Case Study

Case Study Title

Smart Start Food For Life Early Years Setting, Blue Windmill's progression through the Food For Life Programme.

Background

What is the background to the FFL work in the last quarter?

The third quarter for delivery of the FFL programme from November 2016 to January 2017 inclusive has had a focus on engaging the 13 Smart Start Early Years settings in training. The training on offer is to support the settings to achieve the Food For Life criteria and upskill them to engage children, parents and their families in the work.

This quarter the case study provides a summary of Blue Windmill Nursery in Rugby and their journey through their first six months of being part of the Food For Life Programme.

Activity

What was involved in the FFL work and how was it delivered?

An Introductory Training session was delivered on two separate occasions in November and December to all settings to introduce the Food For Life Programme and criteria settings are expected to work towards. The content focussed on the following topics:

- 'Eating Well For The Family, Especially 1-4 Year Olds'
- 'Ideas of How To Provide Healthy Snacks and Drinks For Young Children'
- 'How To Manage Food Refusal and Fussy Eating'
- Discussions Around Child Size Portions of Food To Be Offered To Children In Settings And At Home.

In January a Growing Training session was delivered to the early years settings. The objectives of the session were to support practitioners to:

- Know more about planning a vegetable plot using organic methods and principles
- Understand the composting process and how to apply this in an early years setting
- Demonstrate a practical activity related to gardening with young children
- Identify ways to involve the community in food growing

During the quarter regular contact has been made by email and telephone to the settings to encourage and support them to complete the Food For Life criteria and approach the Food For Life Local Programme Office if there are any issues.

In January the Local Programme Officer has made face to face contact time with the settings and has begun visiting settings to discuss completed criteria and see results being put into practice. These visits will continue with the 13 settings during January, February and March.

Cooking Training is arranged for February and a Food Quality Training session is in development for 2 dates in March.

Outcomes

What were the outcomes or learning points?

- All 13 settings attended the Introductory Food For Life Training Session
- 8 settings attended the Growing Training and received £125 of vouchers to purchase seeds and growing equipment for their nurseries
- During quarter one and two Riversley Children's Centre had become very difficult to engage with and in quarter three Food For Life enquired with WCC Public Health if another setting could be engaged in their place. Food For Life had been approached by Nature Trails Nursery to take part in the programme and it was agreed they could take the place of Riversley Children's Centre. Nature Trails have attended each of the training sessions so far and are very engaged and proactive.
- After trying hard to engage with Masie Day Care, it was discovered on 2nd February 2017 that the setting had been closed down.

Case Study from Blue Windmill, Rugby

What made you get involved with FFL SS Programme?

There is also very little on offer for early years settings which is one of the reasons why we wanted to take part.

The resources on offer were very tempting, including the training, we like the recipes and activities provided through the programme.

We want to show our parents that we are not stagnant and we are moving forward

keeping things current for our children and families in relation to the activities and foods we offer.

We would like to try to achieve the award and this would be an excellent marketing tool for our setting if we could achieve it?

All of the criteria we are hoping to achieve through FFL supports our work for Ofsted, many of the activities stretch across all areas of the curriculum.

We enter Rugby in Bloom each year but we thought the gardening aspect of FFL would encourage us to sustain planting all year round not just for this one annual event.

What changes have you made so far?

We have installed a compost bin since we attended the growing training. Staff have increased their awareness about composting fruit peelings and their tea bags and are they are using the compost bin for these now.

The cook has been briefed on adapting the menus since we attended the FFL introductory training session. She is now sourcing the ingredients when shopping to meet the FFL food quality standards and cooking more healthy foods including free range eggs and meat with the Red Tractor symbol on. The cook has adapted the menus gradually to integrate the changes and we want to continue to make improvements gently over time. The children have had no issues with the foods we have changed to so we will continue with the adaptations.

We are flagging with parents that we are working towards the FFL award and explaining some of the changes across the nursery that we are making and hoping to make. We will do some marketing on this when we are further into the work.

We are currently reviewing our food policy in light of the FFL training we have had and will make some changes once we know our implementation plan.

We are creating a strategy for improving our garden so we have a cohesive approach all year round rather than just for Rugby in Bloom. We want to expand and develop our garden so are now emptying pots from last year and tidying up the garden area to get it ready to start planting once the weather gets better.

What are your future plans for FFL and your nursery?

We have an old playroom which we want to convert into a themed room for parent and children sessions. We may make it an indoor potting room where parents and children can plant seeds rather than using the sand pit and water which we have had for a long time. We may make it into a cooking room for parents and children to cook together. We may be able to divide the room in half and do both but our plans are to make this a practical room which will focus on food and healthy eating. We feel this room will also help staff make the links from the FFL work to the work we are delivery in nursery and engage everyone into the project.

We can't wait to get our garden up and running and introduce the children to all year round planting.

We are attending the FFL cooking training in February and from there we want to set up some cooking sessions with children or children and parents in our setting.

We have lots of ideas and many activities from the FFL resource that we want to implement this year and are looking forward to bringing more activities to the nursery for staff, children and parents.