



Parents are the child's first educators

Bramley Sunnyside Infant School



We began our project knowing we needed to involve parents more within their child's education and learning. Every year we see a decrease in the number of parents attending coffee sessions and initial meetings especially families who have already been through our school. We have an increasing number of children who have not accessed any other early years provision between the age of two to three years and with the closure of our local children's centre we need to fill the gaps as soon as we can.

We noticed through our observations that many children have poor communication skills and limited experiences of rich language and conversations at home. Happy home learning experiences based on a strong partnership between home and school is a priority for us at Bramley Sunnyside Infant School.

"Parents are the first teachers any child encounters, every word, choice and interaction made by a parent, either in their child's presence or while engaging directly with them, plays a significant part in their child's learning; instilling a bedtime routine, gentle reminders of please and thank you all constitute teaching"



(Ofsted 2015, Teaching & Play in The EYFS a balancing act)



We began getting to know our families using a different approach this year starting with an invitation to an open evening in January. This gave working families an opportunity to come and visit us and see our Foundation Stage 1 setting. The event was a massive success with more than 40 families coming along and many choosing to bring their child to our school. The event gave working parents the opportunity to come and visit us. In April we held a meeting informing the parents all about our school vision and continued building these relationships through our coffee sessions in June. During these sessions families find out who their child's keyworker will be and we begin to build relationships. Many parents came along and stayed and played for the whole morning or afternoon and discussed any concerns they had with their keyworker.

During all these conversations with the children and families, staff became aware of a lack of communication development and play skills. Observing families through play and discussions with our local family support worker showed we needed to involve and educate our parents more! A lack of communication between the adult and child showed parents hadn't realised that they needed to talk and build conversations in order to clarify children's thinking and learning.

14% of our families are working with or have worked with in the last twelve months our Children's Centre Family Support team. **Communication and literacy was an area we needed to develop further.**

Research shows that "Across England, almost one in four children did not reach the expected level in language and communication skills. Close to one in five children failed to reach the expected level in personal, social and emotional development across the country"

(Early Intervention Foundation, The Best Start at Home, 2014)

Stay and Play sessions take place after our library session every Thursday. We developed our library provision by offering more stories including a range of non-fiction and fiction books. We have developed story sacks for the parents to share at home to develop their love of books and also include the rich language and conversation for the children. The use of puppets within our story sacks also promotes the child's voice and how they can tell the story together, developing their child's imagination. Parents have an opportunity to see how we share a book with the children including how we discuss pictures and use expressive language. They have time with their child to play, talk and use the activities as well as observe us using rich language and engaging the children. The parents also see us singing nursery rhymes with the children and how rhyme promotes language skills. We now have a rhyme challenge each week where a rhyme goes home for the families to share together and they are encouraged to make props at home to go with their rhyme.



“During Stay and Play it was nice to see the routine of the class and see the children have settled and interact with each other” Parent of Dominic.



The Benefits of Stay & Play are already beginning to impact on the children's development. During recent parent consultation we could see they were beginning to understand their child's development and what they can do to support their learning! Parents are commenting on how Stay & Play is giving them an insight into the opportunities they need to offer their child for example parents are beginning to contribute to their children's learning through success tree leaves and making props to support their child's learning.

*“Stay and Play gives a great insight into what our children get up to. It was fantastic to spend time in the classroom with my little boy Flynn. We both enjoy stay and play sessions.”
Flynn's Parent*

Our way forward now that our parents are more engaged and working with us in collaboration is to begin a parent workshop in the spring term. The parent workshop will enable us to create more storysacks and number rhyme bags for the families to share at home. Parents are already willing to be involved in their children's learning and by promoting the Stay & Play sessions further through displays in the entrance hall we hope more parents will become involved in their child's learning and development. A school emailing service is also being set up to allow further communication between working parents and school and the development of learning stories.

Research from Ofsted shows, “The best settings worked as much with parents as they did with children. This was especially beneficial for the most vulnerable families who came to trust and respect the school through the steps they had taken to engage them in their child's learning in varied and non-threatening ways”

(Ofsted, 2015, Teaching and Play in the early years, a balancing act)