

Start at My Feet Commentary

Targets	How I have improved in this assessment
Read back over my assignment to ensure it portrays my points with clarity	I made sure to read over my work twice to ensure it made sense
Try to support my key messages with research, who agrees? Who disagrees?	I looked deeper into my research to make sure the research I used backed up the point I was making
Include limitations to my practical suggestions	I made sure to include limitations as well as opportunities

My placement school is situated in the Bridgend community where there are multiple opportunities as well as challenges that can provide to the different aspects to a holistic development and learning experience for the children who attend school there. The community and relationships built between the parents, care givers and school create an alliance to benefit the learning and well-being of the children so they can reach their full potential. The school has made many links in accordance with the local authority, extra-curricular groups, charities as well as the community members. My placement school works with the children in a child centred approach to ensure all learning is worthwhile and helps children to improve their well-being as well as development. The school operates family sharing events where they invite the parents and care givers into the school to observe their child's work and to get more involved in what their child is learning about. The key stage 2 teachers have encouraged children to plan projects in hope to make a profit where they then decide where the profit goes towards whether it be new school equipment or goes to a charity of their choice. These initiatives have allowed the children to build self-confidence and persistence in themselves which has reflected on their personalities as well as their learning Estyn (2018).

In my placement school, one of their main focuses to support their children's learning is to work with the families of the pupils before the children begin their education journey. (Nursery Story, 2021) would agree that the transition from home to nursery can be daunting for both parents and children, however with opportunities for communication and planning

between the school and parents, the child will benefit through a structured introduction to nursery. In my placement school, the transition between home and nursery starts in June, for children with additional learning needs. In June, a transition meeting is organised for ALN children. This meeting may include a handover brief and the speech and language team would be present in this meeting too. In July, all parents are invited for a parents evening. This event allows the parents to meet the staff their children will encounter during their time in the school, it allows the parents to feel more involved and connected in their children's education and offers a starting point for parents to develop healthy relationships with the school and the staff. The parents evening gives parents the opportunity to express any worries or concerns they have for their children. It also acts as an opportunity to discuss any questions they may have. In July, children also attend three 'stay and play' sessions. The 'Stay and Play' sessions allow the children to become familiar with the school's environment and to get to know their peers. Balani (2020) claims that children need opportunities for a chance to develop their social skills through building relationships. 'Stay and Play' sessions allow children to get to know others and gain confidence to play and communicate with their future classroom peers. Home visits also take place during July to give pupils the opportunity to create relationships with their teachers in a more comfortable and familiar environment. Breathnach (2023) explains the reasoning behind a home visit is for the teacher to also get to know the students to make lesson planning more suitable for the children's interests. It also gives parents the opportunity to discuss any concerns to do with their child in a confidential setting. In September the school takes a staggered entry approach where small groups of children come in at a time to ensure the teachers are able to manage the children and make sure all needs are met with the children as it is an anxious transition period. The school allows children to build on the duration they stay in school because they can understand it is a big change to their routine, where they go from being co-dependent on their parents or caretakers to becoming more independent and learning and exploring things for themselves. Over time the children build up on the duration until they eventually build, they confidence to stay the full school day.

My placement school works closely with the families and community surrounding. The area unfortunately does not have a community centre, so the school holds community groups there after school hours. These groups include dance class, sporting clubs, church groups, rainbows, and brownies. Children who attend the school benefit through these clubs because they are already familiar with the setting of the school, so they may find it easier to settle into their extracurricular clubs. According to Vain (2023), extracurricular activities can benefit children's learning and development because it helps children gain individualism by learning themselves more and what they like and do not like. Extracurricular activities also help children's social skills and allowing them to develop personal growth. The after-school activities can also improve a child's mental well-being and reduce the risk of anxiety and depression later in academic life. The placement school has welcomed additional lunch time and after-school activities to benefit all pupils by extending the range of activities supplemented to them. The goal of these clubs is to encourage more vulnerable children, whether they have additional learning needs or are younger, to step out their comfort zones and try new things Estyn (2018).

The placement school also has a PFA committee which consists of the pupil's parents. The PFA committee are responsible for organising events for the children which will benefit their learning experiences. The committee has previously organised school discos which has helped children construct relationships with their own initiative. The committee has also funded the school with new equipment such as a climbing frame to progress the children's development further. Moore and Morris (2020) support the need for physical activities in school by explaining how physical activity is critical for the development of children 0-5 years old. Physical activity can benefit a child in many areas such as their ability to focus. Physical activities not only benefit a child's health but can also benefit their well-being by giving the children opportunities to develop resilience and confidence as well as composing themselves when stressed or anxious. Having equipment outside as well as inside can help bring learning outdoors. Approximately 66.8% of the community work full time. 55.9% of people working between 31-48 hours a week and 10.8% working 49 hours or more according to the 2021 census, Nomis (2021). These statistics can be used to reflect that the majority of the school's parents work full time so it comes as a limitation that not many parents are able to contribute their time to the school however, grandparents and other immediate family members are encouraged to participate when they can by assisting on school trips as well as coming into the school to share their life experiences for example family members who have received achievements in their lives. This motivates the children to reach their full potential and to feel motivated that they can achieve what they want. Having the support of the Families allows the school to plan lessons where children can learn through trips around the community as well as listening to the stories of people they know and see as 'role models' which can help the children engage in the learning more effectively.

The placement school engages with the local community by holding local charity fundraisers. The children are given control over what charity they want to support which encourages them to use initiative and gain interest and knowledge of the community around them. Early Education (2021) believes children develop a sense of belonging when they learn about their local community. This sense of belonging could then progress into a need to looking after their community, which encourages resilience and problem solving. The school also engages with the local foodbank. The children are asked to bring in any unwanted, unused food to provide for the foodbank. The idea of the foodbank is to educate the children of the different circumstances people may have in their community and help them be grateful for their basic needs being met. The placement school is in Bridgend where approximately 40.4% of people identify themselves as Christians according to Varbes (2021). This is the highest identifiable religion in the community which could explain why the placement school has the local pastor partake in an assembly every Monday which is dedicated to Christianity. According to J.C (2023) Teaching religion in primary schools is crucial for a child's personal well-being. Religious studies are used in primary schools to enhance critical thinking as well as help children's moral values.

The placement school works closely with the community to ensure that all areas of learning are at a high quality. This makes certain that the children are not only learning, but also enjoy what they are learning. The school realised it had limitations where they did not have

the expertise amongst staff to provide high quality lessons of expressive arts, so they communicated with the local authority, music services and local dance companies to collaborate on lesson plans to make it worthwhile for the children Estyn (2018).

The placement school offers various strategies which align with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. The placement school provide all children with additional learning needs an individual development plan. According to National Autistic Society (2020), an individual development plan (IDP) includes consensual information of the individual which can include contact details. The plan should also include the diagnosis of what ALN the child has. The additional learning provision should also be included as well as how the ALP will be provided and what are the goals of the individual. The placement school encourage children with ALN to create a one-page profile. The one-page profile allows the teachers and staff to get to know the child and will let the staff know what the child is interested in. It is important for teachers to understand every child is different and will learn better in different circumstances. Teachers need to take a professional but personal approach when planning lessons and interacting with ALN children. The teachers can incorporate the interests of the child into their learning to encourage more engagement to learning Teach First (2021).

Working with the local community is vital when planning for the learning and development of early years children. Community involvement helps build solid links for the child's engagement to learning. Having family members or local companies come in and express their success can encourage a child to have the right attitude towards learning and could prompt their initiative to be the best they can be to reach their full potential. When I work in a school in the future, I would like for my future class to have many opportunities to be involved in the community or to interact with the community because it provides many opportunities for the child. Every community is different so children will learn different things from their own community that they can share and bring the learning forward into their adult lives. Another future target of mine is to make sure I am as inclusive as I can be with additional learning needs children. I will use the individual learning plan and one page profile to cater lessons to their interest because every child has the right to an education.

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