

Interactions

Stay, play and take home...

Supporting parents to understand *how* children learn will help focus their efforts on building a lifelong love of learning, a great basis for future educational success...

Case Study

Little Squirrels Pre-School in Earls Shilton used Stay and Play sessions to introduce the idea of take home activity boxes, based on the EYFS Areas of Learning, and model how to interact with children in a positive way.

Here they explain how the idea took off...



We felt our parents would benefit from more information about the EYFS, so we created some 'take home' activity boxes. The boxes contained a range of resources to use at home and some suggested ideas for different parent: child interactions. In our Mathematics box, for example, we supplied an array of interesting counting and number resources, including a selection of sea shells to explore. Suggested activities included providing opportunities to sort, match and count different objects, and a positional language game - putting teddy **on top** of the table, **under** the bed or **behind** the box. The cards also suggested how adults could extend the activities and we included a small notebook for families to make comments about their experiences.

To launch the boxes we ran several 'Stay and Play' sessions, open to all family members, where we also shared examples of the activities we provide within the setting. During these sessions we talked about the EYFS Areas of Learning and also the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Sharing the 'real' examples of activities that could be used at home was really helpful for parents. Practitioners also modelled different ways to interact with children - i.e. using open-ended questions - and displayed examples around the setting, detailing how to support the different ways children learn. These sessions enabled parents to gain a better understanding of the EYFS and the sort of activities that their children benefit from on a daily basis.

After the Stay and Play sessions we started sending the boxes home with children and their families. Once they returned we encouraged children to give feedback to their friends - some brought in photographs, others' parents had written in the notebook. All families told us how easy and enjoyable it had been.

Practitioners have found the boxes to be particularly useful if there is a certain area they would like a key child to focus on, as the relevant box can be sent home. It also provides a good opportunity to talk to parents about children's progress. The boxes have been a good starting point for making parents more aware of the ways in which their children learn too, and activities include references to the EYFS Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Our plan is to build up the range of resources and activities within the boxes, and also encourage parents to contribute to them. We hope to offer more Stay and Play sessions in the future and trial Parent Workshops, where practitioners and other parents can model different activities to try at home e.g. making play dough.

relationships attachment **interactions**

Key Person role

Stay and Play sessions and Parent Workshops are a great way for Key Persons to model interactions with children, including giving meaningful praise and encouragement. Why not display the words and phrases that practitioners use around the setting for parents to see.

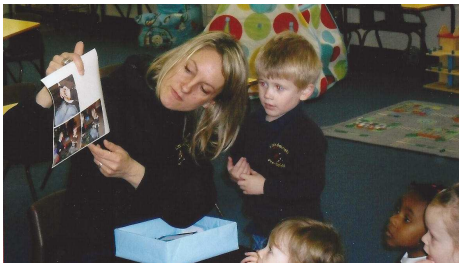


Reflecting on practice:

Do parents know what activities and experiences you provide for their children? Are they aware of how they could extend these at home?

How would you seek to ensure *all* children and their families had the opportunity to attend a Stay and Play session?

Have you shared 'A Parents Guide to the EYFS'?



Further ideas...

- Why not develop boxes for other things you want to support parents with - i.e. the transition to school, a stay in hospital, the arrival of a new baby...
- Communication with parents needs to meet their individual needs and preferences.
- Have you thought about using text messages, email, or a website?
- Research is key – what do your parents want? How can you meet these needs safely?

Remember...

'Interacting and problem solving with children' and 'Creating opportunities to play with friends' are two key activities to 'stretch a child's mind'. Encourage parents to think about their child's Personal, Social and Emotional Development at home.

Remember... Research suggests that practitioners should share with parents the importance of the following:

Recognising success, giving positive feedback - building self-confidence and self-esteem.

Providing opportunities to learn in meaningful, enjoyable contexts.



activities experiences opportunities stimulation



How do you share these key messages with parents?