

This document has been archived because it is no longer current.

Helping families get ready for school: Little Stars Childcare Centre

URN: EY449313

Region: South West

Remit: Early years

Provider background

Little Stars Childcare Centre operates from a dedicated area of Ellacombe Church in Ellacombe, Torquay, an area with very high levels of deprivation. The centre is run by a Learning Academy Partnership (South West) which comprises of Little Stars Childcare Centre, Ellacombe Academy and Ilsham C of E Academy (a national support school). The centre was judged outstanding in all aspects of its provision at its first inspection in March 2013.

Brief description

At most early years settings, supporting children's readiness for school tends to focus on developing the child's skills so that they arrive at school ready to learn. At Little Stars Childcare Centre, leaders and staff recognise that parents and carers need help too. Supporting the whole family to be ready for school is reaping rewards as everyone develops the attitudes and skills needed to ensure that children quickly settle into and benefit from school life.

This example is part of a [set of six](#), published in conjunction with the survey report *Are you ready? Good practice in school readiness*.

The good practice in detail

Staff at Little Stars Childcare Centre begin to build strong relationships with parents and carers even before their child starts at the setting. They are warmly welcomed

into weekly 'stay and play' sessions where they can play with their child while finding out about the nursery.

Estelle Cole, the nursery manager, takes time to meet with parents and carers individually so that she can introduce them to what the nursery has to offer their family. She recognises the importance of working closely with families and ensures that she does all she can to involve them in their child's learning because as she says, 'I don't want any barriers to engagement'.

These sessions are complemented by staff visiting every family in their homes before children start. During these visits:

- parents and carers, children and staff begin to really get to know each other in an environment that is comfortable and familiar to the family
- parents and carers can share their in-depth knowledge about their child: their likes, dislikes and what they know and can do
- staff can help parents and carers begin to consider if they would like any help and guidance as their child starts nursery and ultimately as they move on to starting school – this means that staff can provide tailored support for each individual child and their family as soon as they start.

Expectations are high at Little Stars Childcare Centre. Staff know that children need to attend nursery regularly to build on their previous learning and experiences.

They make sure parents and carers know how important this is and that they expect them to bring their children to nursery every day, just as they should ensure that their children attend school every day. When



attendance levels drop, staff work with parents and carers to identify what is preventing them bringing their child to nursery regularly and draw on the LAP's pastoral team to put the right help and support in place. This might include:

- pastoral workers
- a special educational needs coordinator
- an education psychologist
- speech and language support

- child protection expertise
- English as an additional language specialists
- family learning.

There is a very wide range of support on offer to parents and carers. Families can access parenting courses which help them to understand how young children learn and provide them with ideas they can implement at home to help improve their child's behaviour and progress. The management team understands that families often face challenges that can impact on them being able to effectively help their children to learn and develop. For example, when families are facing financial difficulties, staff can help them to tackle housing issues, offer financial and debt management and access to the local food bank which help to relieve the pressures which impact on their children.

'Reach for the stars'

Leaders and staff have very high aspirations for the families they serve. Their motto of 'Reach for the stars' underpins all that they do.



Leaders believe that it is crucial to support the parents and carers' learning as well as the children's.

They know that parents and carers want to provide as well as they can for their children and offer them opportunities to learn and develop alongside

their children. Literacy and numeracy courses on offer not only better equip parents and carers to support their children's learning but also lead to them gaining qualifications.

Excellent teaching by well-qualified, highly trained staff has led to children making **outstanding progress**. Children rise to staff's high expectations:

- They quickly learn how to work together, cooperate and share.
- Through effective modelling by staff they develop good listening and speaking skills.

- They show a keen interest in looking at books and, as soon as they are ready, staff teach them the sounds that letters make to help them begin to read.
- Children experiment with making marks and proudly display their writing.

Staff provide gentle and consistent support and guidance and work closely with parents and carers so that together they can develop and implement a consistent approach to helping their children to learn. As a result, the whole family is exceptionally well prepared so that children get off to a flying start in school.

Other good practice examples in this set

Ann Tayler Children's Centre Nursery
Little Stars Childcare Centre
Mayflower Primary School
St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Stanton Bridge Primary School
The Village Nursery

The good practice case studies that Ofsted publishes highlight specific examples of practice that providers of education, learning and children's services have used to achieve successful outcomes.

For education, the case studies do not recommend a single particular approach to teaching and learning. Ofsted has no preferred lesson structure or teaching style. We showcase and share a wide range of approaches that providers have found work well for them in achieving good outcomes for children, young people and learners.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

To view other good practice examples, go to:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.