



National Day Nurseries Association

Maths Champions Case Study

Blossoms Day Nursery

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Introduction

I have thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from the Maths Champions project as it has made me look at my own perception of maths both for myself and the children I care for. It has made me realise I am much more confident in maths than I first thought and also that as a nursery we do a lot more maths with the children than I first thought. We just don't always recognise it.

Highlights and lowlights of the project

I have spent more time as an EYP focusing on maths and rather than just thinking about possible opportunities for maths in my head I have acted on this with the children, e.g. counting toothbrushes out and back with the children, working out how many more plates we need. I feel this has been a positive experience for the team and I am talking through why I am doing activities rather than just doing them.

The BKSB was scary for some team members as they were not sure what to expect and thought it was going to be similar to the maths exams they took at school. They quickly saw the benefit of the BKSB tool when they were able to see exactly where they needed the extra support and development and were able to access the tools to be able to do this.

The project has made all staff look at how they are offering mathematical opportunities for all children and to assess their own confidence levels when supporting this. All staff now offer many more

maths activities and opportunities for children in their care and also spot more maths occurring naturally during other activities when they observe and assess their key children. This has been evidenced in the improvement in this area of learning across the children in the nursery as detailed later.

Impact of the project

The team

I have developed my own mathematical skills and knowledge. When I initially did the BKSB assessment I came out as a level 2, when in fact I knew I was better than that and had forgotten how to do some of the maths involved in the questioning. I went away and looked at the areas where I knew I hadn't done as well as I should have, practised and retook the assessment, coming out as a level 3 this time. This boosted my confidence and made me feel much better about myself. I encouraged my team to do the same; some have felt comfortable doing this, others have not felt confident and I am working carefully with these team members to raise their confidence levels.

We have asked for more focus on maths from our teams. This has included adding maths to the planning sheets as an area of focus on a daily basis, both with activities and the continuous provision. This has enabled staff to be more proactive in providing more opportunities for children to count, calculate, problem solve, measure and use their maths skills and knowledge on a daily basis.

The staff's confidence levels in supporting maths in the early years have increased dramatically and you can hear number rhymes and children counting out loudly and confidently and talking about maths across the rooms and outside.

One particular activity that has proven popular with the staff and the children alike was 'make a long creature'. We provided children with cardboard and materials to make a long creature and asked the children whose was the longest? The children compared their

creatures then talked about measuring the creatures to see how long they were. This activity started as a simple activity focusing on the mathematical language of long and short and developed to a measuring activity purely through the direction the children took it. Our staff are feeling much more confident in following the child's lead in maths as they are in the other areas of learning.

The environment

We have created a focused 'maths' area in the main reception, this reminds our team that maths should be incorporated into every day and to provide a different focus for learning on different weeks. This area also provides information and support to parents to help them to see how we are supporting mathematical development with their children through play and how they can extend this at home.

It provides an area where children can revisit on their own as and when they wish to continue their mathematical play, and includes three boxes numbered 1-3 on where the children can choose one, two and three items to place in the box to depict the numbers. This activity is popular with all ages of children and we can extend and differentiate the activity with the children as an adult-led activity.



The children and their development

The project has really made us focus on maths as this was already identified as the weak area of learning in the setting. The impact this work has had on the children's mathematical development is measureable, as with all the areas where we have made changes.

We measured children's stage of development in maths prior to the project in October, then we measured again in December and their progress is clearly visible when we compare this to the other areas of learning in which they were progressing well. Children have become more confident with their counting skills and use their mathematical skills and knowledge in other activities, e.g. role play and storytelling.

This in turn has increased the confidence levels of the team and has promoted more meaningful maths activities and resources to be developed by the staff

Future plans after the project

We will keep maths as a focus in our nursery now and in the future as all team members have been able to see the benefits clearly in what they do.

Some of our team are looking at how they can continue their own mathematical development and there has been some competitiveness in the BKSB scores which has spurred some to want to improve their own knowledge and understanding in this area. As a Maths Champion I will support each team member in the way that suits their needs.