

Using ICT in the Foundation Stage

Ben's learning journey

Case study

Ben's journey with the centre first began when she decided that she wanted her son G..., then eighteen months, to socialize more with children of his own age. The centre ran a Stay and Play programme which Ben and G... attended. Ben found these sessions provided valuable time during which she could watch and learn about G...'s interests, whilst he explored and investigated.

It was time for G... to move into nursery provision at the centre. This was a very anxious time for the family as they were unsure how G... would cope with nursery, especially being away from the key people that he was used to. Ben was expecting her second child and she was unsure of how this new baby would affect G....

G... settled in well into nursery provision. Ben had a little girl called S.... Ben and S... quickly joined a new mums group at the centre. Ben had developed a much wider understanding on how children explore and learn through her own experiences with G.... Ben was very eager to learn about S...'s development from the moment that she was born.

As S... got older, Ben decided to attend Early Matters group (family learning programme) at the Centre. The sessions were all about encouraging parents to understand more about how their children learn and how they can support this learning. Ben found these sessions very informative, her observations of G... and S... came together like the pieces of a jigsaw. As the weeks went by Ben got more and more interested in S...'s learning and was beginning to ask more detailed questions to the centre staff.

The centre staff had just introduced a new group allowing parents to learn about their children's development through ICT. The Early Years development worker encouraged Ben to join this group as this could help answer some of her questions. The session involved the parents using PDAs (hand held computers) to document their child's learning and interests at home and the centre. During the sessions Ben found that her own knowledge of ICT greatly improved, helped by using the PDA to extend her ICT skills.

Ben's early thoughts about the PDA was that she had found it easy to use because it was so like the computer programmes that she has at home and if she got stuck she found the information books provided by the centre helpful to use. Ben experimented with the PDA trying out new skills such as: making and storing files from the PDA onto her computer at home, documenting S...'s learning through following her interests, downloading pictures that she had recorded onto PowerPoint.

Documenting in this way helped Ben to be more aware of S...'s patterns of learning. Ben was introduced to schemas. Observing S...'s schematic play at home, she identified a very strong in-and-out/enclosure schema. She recorded this schematic play using her PDA.

From Ben's detailed observations the centre staff suggested that they could form a whole picture of S...'s developmental interests. Staff were able to follow her interests at the centre and provide resources to support her schema. The sessions have given Ben the confidence and knowledge to talk and show other parents and practitioners what she has learnt.

As Ben started to get used to the PDA she found that G..., now three years old, was very interested in what she was doing. He started to ask questions on how it worked and watched her closely when she was documenting S..., through using the camera and video on the PDA.

Ben decided to let G... share in her learning and encouraged him to use the PDA through daily routine activities at home, this included making a shopping list on the PDA and then for G... to

Case study

mark off the shopping as they collected it from the shelves. G... also extended this activity, after several weeks he started to document the shopping trip. As they collected the food from the shelves G... decided to take a photo or video of them collecting their shopping. This made the checkout assistant smile as G... said, 'Say cheese', and then takes their photo. When they get home they had quality time together looking at what had been recorded. Ben found that G... talked through what happened and he was able to talk and show family members, especially grandma about his adventure. Ben has found that while G... has been using the PDA she has seen that he is fascinated with letters and numbers and he is able to use the keyboard to make small words and order a range of numbers.

Ben found that she took the PDA everywhere she went, so that she didn't miss that vital observation, this included the restaurant, family/friends' houses, local parks, family parties, and many more.

Ben comments that the PDA has allowed them all to spend time together, learning from each other. The fact that the PDA is small, light and portable meant that she could take it everywhere with her.

S... is now at the stage where she is able to use the stylus to mark on the notes page and G... finds this very exciting as she is writing. It has also encouraged G... to turn-take with S...; he shows her how to play with the games and has gained a lot of patience with her when she wants it for herself.

Ben said 'The PDA has helped G... so much with his memory, language and coordination skills.'

I asked Ben the question, 'Where to next?' Her response was: 'I would like to extend my knowledge further with using ICT and to be able to share my learning with close friends and family members and also with other parents at the centre.'

Childcare and community co-ordinator.