West Somerset Healthy Movers Case Study: Teddy Bears Nursery

July 2019
Teddy Bears Nursery

Introduction

In 2018, Teddy Bears Nursery in West Somerset, was invited to be part of the West Somerset Healthy Movers project. The project aimed to work with practitioners and parents to develop physical literacy in children. Healthy Movers was delivered by the Youth Sport Trust (YST), on behalf of the West Somerset Opportunity Area.

Background

Teddy Bears Nursery is located in the village of Washford and is a feeder nursery for Old Cleeve C of E First School. The Nursery has two staff members and runs a three-hour session ten times a week for up to 22 children aged 3-4 years old. Prior to Healthy Movers, the children took part in some free-flow physical activity but Alison, the Nursery Teacher highlighted that many children did not want to run around outside in free play. Structured physical activity sessions were typically limited and many children were reluctant to join in group physical activities.

Activities

Alison attended the Healthy Movers training. She spoke very highly of the training, and particularly emphasised the enthusiasm of the tutors, the interactive delivery and how easy it was to learn how to deliver the activities. The resource cards have also provided a helpful reminder of the activities when Alison is back in the Nursery.

“If we don’t start now, by the time they start school they will be reluctant to do anything. We need to get them motivated at a young age to want to do physical activity.”

(Alison, Nursery Teacher)

“Healthy Movers is a great idea. Anything that encourages children to be active is great, instead of being on their iPads.”

(Parent)

“The resource cards are fantastic; I absolutely couldn’t do without them. They are so clear and straightforward; they are brilliant.”

(Alison, Nursery Teacher)

“The YST Healthy Movers staff is absolutely amazing. Her enthusiasm makes me have the confidence to do it.”

(Alison, Nursery Teacher)

The Healthy Movers sessions are delivered for half an hour in the afternoon, two or three times a week. Both members of staff at the Nursery are able to lead the Healthy Movers activities. They have focussed on the activities that are different to what the children might have done before, for example they had never used scarves in an activity before, and the equipment has really helped to engage the children in the activities.

They also deliver a Stay and Play session once every half term, which parents are invited to. They did find that some children whose parents did not attend struggled to see other children taking part with their parents so for the Stay and Play sessions, they now tend to just engage the children whose parents have attended. They also photocopy the resource cards so parents can take part in the activities at home with their children, and the children have been given rucksacks which contain resource cards to support activities at home, along with some simple equipment, such as balls. In
addition, the Nursery shares photos with the parents of the children taking part in Healthy Movers and in some cases, parents have posted pictures of the children doing the Healthy Movers activities at home.

Benefits

Benefits to the practitioners

Healthy Movers has given Alison the confidence to deliver the activities with the children. At the start, she lacked confidence in delivering the activities in front of the parents at the Stay and Play sessions but the YST Healthy Movers staff, the resource cards and the positive engagement from the children has given her the confidence to do it.

“I am a lot more relaxed when I do the activities with the children and it’s helped my mindset with the children.”
(Kirsty, Nursery Nurse)

“Hand on heart, I wouldn’t have done anything like this without Healthy Movers. Although it’s very basic, it’s just things I wouldn’t have thought of.”
(Alison, Nursery Teacher)

Benefits to the children

Physical development: The children are enthusiastic to take part in the Healthy Movers activities; the diversity of the activities and the equipment has really supported their engagement. The Nursery staff have also observed the children doing the Healthy Movers activities in their own play. Staff reported that the children’s coordination skills have noticeably improved, along with their balance. They believe that children who had lower physical abilities at the start have shown the most improvements, for example moving their bodies in different ways and improving their core strength. Kirsty, the Nursery Nurse, also explained how the Healthy Movers activities have encouraged some of the quieter children to get involved; the activities have been more directive for them and they are able to learn from the other children because they are all taking part in the same activities together. Several parents highlighted that they had also seen improvements in their children’s physical skills, such as catching, throwing, kicking a ball, balance and coordination. One of the parents also mentioned that their child has been doing the Healthy Movers cards at home, with help from his older siblings – “the cards have given them ideas for play they can do on their own.”

Personal, social and emotional development: Some children were very reluctant to take part in the activities at the start and were very self-conscious doing the activities in front of their peers but the activities have helped to improve their confidence and they can’t wait to show off their new skills.

Communication and language: Overall, the children’s listening skills, focus, and ability to follow instructions have improved, particularly as they are keen to hear what they Healthy Movers activity they are going to do next. For one child, her listening skills have improved considerably, and the staff have now noticed that her language is starting to improve as a result of this.
Benefits to parents
Feedback from parents who have engaged in Healthy Movers has been very positive. The home packs were very well received and parents that attended the Stay and Play sessions had enjoyed taking part. Consultations with a sample of parents highlighted that Healthy Movers has given them ideas of different activities that they can do with their children, particularly if they are indoors. Going into the Nursery has also given parents the opportunity to get to know the staff and to meet some of the other parents. Feedback from parents also highlighted that the children loved their parents coming into the Nursery to take part in activities with them, and similarly the parents enjoyed being part of the activities.

Clare’s Story
Clare attends Teddy Bears Nursery and prior to Healthy Movers, she struggled with her physical development. Healthy Movers has given her the opportunity to take part in activities with different equipment; it has helped her learn how to hold the equipment and move with it in different ways. As an example, prior to Healthy Movers, she would not have been able to grip a scarf but now she has a much more solid grip. She is also much more engaged at Nursery, for example sitting to listen to instructions, and not fidgeting as much. She is always eager to try out the next piece of equipment and the next Healthy Movers activities.

Future
The Healthy Movers activities will continue next year and the staff are already starting to think about how they can build on the activities, for example by encouraging the children that have already taken part this year to show the new children some of the activities.

Note: A pseudonym has been used for this story.
YST RESEARCH

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) is a national children’s charity passionate about creating a future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits that come from play and sport. YST Research offers research, analysis, insight and evaluation services to organisations with an interest in the wider children and young people’s sector. Our research expertise is focused on improving the wellbeing of children and young people through sport and physical activity.

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