

Half a Century of Integrated Provision

It seems fitting that our School Spotlight award this issue should go to an early years provider and we highlight below the achievements of Charnwood, a nursery which has featured integrated provision for longer than most.

You could pass through the comfortable Stockport suburb of Heaton Moor every day without knowing of the existence of Charnwood. Hidden away behind an imposing church building on the main road, it is a secret worth discovering. Set up some fifty years ago in her own home by Grace Wyatt, a local teacher taking a break from teaching while her children were young, Charnwood has always catered for all children who might benefit from its provision, regardless of any special educational needs or disabilities they might have, and that tradition of integration has continued to the present day.

Charnwood defies simple categorisation. Described as a Nursery School and Family Centre, it is largely funded by money raised through its status as a charitable trust but a significant number of its places are funded by Stockport LEA for children and families with special educational needs. The Charnwood Trust emphasises Christian values although the school welcomes children and families from all faiths and, although it could easily allocate every available place to children from the local community, Charnwood caters for children from across the borough.

The nursery caters for children in both years of the Foundation Stage and every afternoon an Opportunity Group is open to children from birth to three, many of whom have been referred to the group because of their special educational needs. Provision in both areas is entirely integrated. The Charnwood staff are a multi-disciplinary team, very much in keeping with the growing trend in primary and early years education. As well as teachers and nursery nurses, the team includes speech and language therapists, a physiotherapist and a family support worker. Both floors are lively and stimulating environments where children play confidently and independently with multi-



sensory resources while more directed teaching takes place close by. Additional physical resources available to help cater for the diverse needs of children who attend include a light sensory room, an indoor sunken sandpit, therapy rooms and a landscaped outdoor play area with soft surfaces.

Training is taken very seriously at Charnwood. Where appropriate, staff offer training to professionals in the primary schools which are to receive their children as part of the transition process. Charnwood also offers training to students on a range of courses, including Institute of Education trainees from both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes who have completed placements there at various times.

A family-centred approach to early years education is central to the Charnwood philosophy and for many years the school has been putting into practice the integrated approach to provision which is increasingly recognised as vital to ensure the welfare and education of children and their families. Many children and parents return to school for some time after leaving to take part in a variety of clubs and support groups on offer. Charnwood maintains network links with other providers with a similar approach, such as those in Sure Start centres based in other parts of Stockport. What it does most though is to carry on with its own work in its own way, much as it has since the days of Grace Wyatt and seeking, as current Principal Jean Lee observes, "to include every child and to support every family".



In every issue we celebrate the achievements and distinctive

character of one of our partner primary schools and early years settings. This month the spotlight shines upon Charnwood Nursery and Family Centre. If you would like to nominate your own or another school for the spotlight position in a future issue, please email us at

partnershipmatters@mmu.ac.uk

and let us know some of the things which make your school a special place for children to attend.

For more information about Charnwood, go to

www.charnwoodfamilycentre.org.uk

