



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE** | North of  
England



## INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

# The Butterworth Family Childcare and Education Team

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Investors in People North of England is delivered by idg, official partner for the North East, North West and Yorkshire & Humber

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## **Introduction**

This is a review of **The Butterworth Family Childcare and Education Team** using the Investors in People Standard. The business has opted to add stretch and challenge to its people practices by using the entire framework for its review to maintain beyond the standard Gold Award.

The review took place on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2013 and was covered by Bill Twiss and myself. The business employs 24 full time equivalent staff. 16 of them, 66 percent, took part in one to one and group discussions about the culture and practices at **The Butterworth Family Childcare and Education Team**.

The business operates over two sites and both were covered during the review (Little Holcombe and Tower View Day Nurseries).

## **Outcome**

**The Butterworth Family Childcare and Education Team** continues to meet the Investors in People Standard. The business meets **192** evidence requirements in total, which means it has maintained its Gold Award. There are several strengths to its people culture and practices, and some areas to consider for further development. On behalf of Investors in People North of England, the Investors in People Specialists would like to congratulate the business on this achievement. We would also like to thank all those that took part in the review. Their open and honest discussions gave us an excellent picture of the working practices in place and brought the business to life.

## What Makes The Butterworth Family Childcare and Education Team a Gold Investor in People?

### **Plans and Communication**

- Excellent communication of core values and vision
- Focus on quality and best practice
- People are involved through meetings and training sessions
- Key performance indicators are clear and include the development of plans, completion of learning journeys, quality of care and children's progress
- Social responsibility is apparent throughout and includes making sure children are equipped with the necessary social skills and supporting charitable and community events
- Stakeholder involvement is strong and there is a Parent Partnership that keeps parents and carers in the loop and able to contribute to plans and developments

*"We all input to planning based on our observations of the children in the room."  
"I have been a floater but am soon to do my first planning and have been helped by my Room Leader."*

*"We all know what is going on and we are up to speed with each child – there is nothing hidden."*

*"We know that quality of all aspects are our key goals – we want to remain Outstanding and improve what we offer all the time."*

*"The EYFS is good – much more detailed measurement of progress and no gaps."*

*"We work closely with partner professionals and the school to make sure that all the information is shared and transition goes smoothly."*

*"We involve parents all the time, as much as possible."*

### **Learning and Development**

- Learning and development is tailored to needs and updated to meet emerging priorities.
- In house, on the job training, coaching, conferences and attendance at network meetings are used as valuable learning opportunities
- Succession planning is used well to build capability for the future. People's strengths and talents are utilised, for example in taking up acting positions and adding to their responsibilities
- Career development is encouraged and there are some strong examples of people moving from apprentice to middle and senior manager positions
- Personal development is supported. A good example is a member of staff who has been given time to study a Masters' level degree in Education and Inclusion

*"I cannot believe the opportunities I have had here."*

*"We go to network meetings, conferences and have consultants coming in."*

*"The learning opportunities are always flexible and interesting – they are quite innovative in their approach."*

*"I was coached by the manager to develop my skills and I am now much more confident in my ability."*

*"We value the learning – it is all relevant to our roles and we are able to improve our practice because of it."*

### **Ideas, Equality, Ownership and Empowerment**

- There is a fair and open recruitment process and some really good examples of staff being involved in this through offering feedback on the performance of candidates during trial shifts
- People are supported to achieve a healthy work-life balance and confirm that there is a flexible and individual approach to meeting needs

- Involvement and empowerment are strong features and people confirm that they are listened to, trusted and involved in decisions
- People are encouraged to take ownership and lead aspects of the nurseries' work
- Staff opinions are often sought and feedback from staff, parents and children, is listened to and acted on where possible
- Upward feedback is welcomed and people confirm a culture of empowerment that gives them confidence in their ability

*"I took over the acting role and I have been able to tweak things and use a less structured approach."*

*"The managers and the owners actually want to know what we think – we are always listened to."*

*"I have had so many opportunities to grow and develop. I am completely trusted."*

*"Whilst the managers are always there, they trust us to do our jobs and listen to what we say."*

*"I will be attending meetings about the children I work with, liaising with outside professionals and sharing information."*

*"I have moved upwards ever since I came – they have been completely supportive of me and trusted my judgement."*

*"We are now also involved in deciding on the awards for employee of the month – our opinion is valued."*

## **Leadership and Management**

- Managers and Room Leaders are praised for their fair and equitable approach, willingness to give practical help and their strong and inspirational leadership
- The business recognises the qualities that current and future managers need and uses a blend of formal learning, coaching and on the job experience to develop a strong group of leaders and potential leaders
- The business benchmarks its leadership and management practices through network events and conferences and through comparing external reports, such as those from the Office For Standards in Education
- People are very well supported to develop their careers and there are some excellent examples including the Special Needs Co-ordinator who is studying a Masters' level degree in Education and Inclusion and in the Acting Deputy Manager who started as an apprentice
- The culture of openness, transparency and involvement is praised by all those interviewed as a significant strength of the business
- Coaching is now part of the culture
- People see the senior managers as inspirational, caring, consistent and trustworthy

*"I am enjoying the role and have learned a lot more about the big picture by learning from the manager."*

*"I have been so well supported by the managers here – not just professionally but on a personal level. They really care about people."*

*"The managers roll up their sleeves and get involved, they don't hide in the office like I've seen at some places."*

*"I would love to be like our manager – she is a real inspiration to me."*

*"The owners are excellent role models too – they really care about quality and the provision is very important to them. They are also interested in how we are."*

*"We have feedback all the time. Although we have formal appraisals, we all know where we are up to because feedback is ongoing."*

## **Value and Recognition**

- Culture of praise and thanks
- Clear strategy for recognition, including Room of the Month, Employee of the Month, Champagne Moments and other recognition awards

- What motivates people is understood and the business is innovative in its approach to celebrating success, using Oscar's Award ceremonies, Christmas celebrations and developing a relaxing staff room space that enables staff to "escape" from the hustle and bustle of the nursery to take their breaks
- The business is adept at making routine tasks and training into fun events. For example, the Christmas Decorations night is where staff stay after work to put up all the trimmings for Christmas and this is made into a fun night with refreshments, music and a competitive element
- People in all roles feel that their contributions are valued and cite feedback from parents, colleagues and managers, external reports and gifts and cards as some examples

*"The managers here really know how to motivate us. We had a meeting after work and to make it interesting and more fun, we all went to a local pub and chatted over a meal."*

*"The opportunities we have and the trust we are given shows us that we are valued."*

*"Parents are good at giving feedback and so are our managers."*

*"If things go wrong we are always supported."*

*"They go well beyond what they need to do. They supported me with counselling when I had some personal problems."*

*"One of the staff had no babysitter and the owners paid a professional sitter so she could attend the Christmas party."*

*"They must spend a fortune on flowers – they are always noticing what we do."*

*"If you've had a really tough week it is great for someone to give you a Champagne Moment."*

### **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

- Monitoring and evaluation are critical aspects of the continuous improvement culture.
- Scrutiny of plans and Learning Journeys and regular audits by the Early Years specialist practitioner makes sure that practice is up to date and at the quality expected
- Comparisons and benchmarks are used well to evidence progress and to make sure the business stays at the forefront of practice
- Conferences, comparing reports, working with outside professionals and carefully measuring children's progress are elements of the approach to evaluation and continuous improvement
- The business regularly updates its comprehensive self-evaluation document, which plots progress against all the areas of provision and highlights development needs
- Continuous improvement is at the heart of the strategy and since the previous review the business has strengthened its approach to leadership and management development, brought innovation to planning and developed systems that help people to measure children's progress and development more accurately.

*"We review what we are doing all the time."*

*"We get feedback on what we need to improve and we all want to improve."*

*"We are good at measuring progress and we are never satisfied – we always want to get a bit better."*

*"We do benchmark but we also need to keep an eye on it so we do not give too much away to the competition."*

*"We benchmark our Learning Journeys with those done by other providers and that reinforces our confidence."*

## The Butterworth Family Childcare and Education Team – Areas of Focus for the Review

### **Involvement and understanding of the “Big Picture” – how much do people know about the big picture and how their roles and performance impacts on business success?**

The nurseries are very well led and managed and it is evident that people understand the big picture of what the nurseries are aiming to achieve. The owners trust and support their managers well and believe in a culture of empowerment and ownership. This culture extends throughout the business and there are good illustrations of people being encouraged and inspired to take responsibility for the day to day running of rooms or covering acting roles. Leaders and managers are very alert to changes that arise from national initiatives such as the change to the Early Years Foundation Stage, new inspection criteria and from in-house audits, assessments and observations.

As a result of the positive attributes demonstrated through people with leadership and management responsibility, people believe that change is managed very well. Many are motivated by change and trying out new ideas. The effective leadership and management of change has always been seen as essential to continuous improvement and this remains so today. Discussions identify several valuable aspects to change management for achieving the bigger picture in summary these are:

- Very strong ethical values that run through the way the business looks after its people, values them and supports them both professionally and personally
- Being accessible for assistance, guidance and coaching people through the implications of key changes such as the new approach to Learning Journeys
- Having up to date knowledge and recognising that managers are role models for continuous learning through benchmarking, formal development and practice
- Giving people the skills and ownership to take responsibility for matters like acting roles or key group work that individualises learning
- Using on-going feedback from stakeholders, especially parents, staff and primary schools to make improvements
- Introducing formal leadership and management development through college and work-place based National Vocational Qualifications
- Bringing innovation to learning and development, for example, evening sessions to look at changes to planning and Learning Journeys needed for the new Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

People know and understand that management of change is for a purpose. Some illustrations of outcomes from change and developments since the previous review are:

- Being able to cover roles for maternity leave which is providing opportunities for personal and career development, bringing continuity and is also cost effective
- Further developing the relationships with reception class teachers in the primary schools and introducing “*my final journey*” so that schools have focused and useful information
- Maintaining, under the new and more challenging inspection framework an outstanding inspection judgement
- Extensive and very detailed work on aligning plans, Learning Journeys and support for the next steps to the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

The entire team has very high aspirations and ambitions for the nurseries. They are confident that future change will be evolutionary and will lead to making their outstanding nurseries even better.

**Change Management – how do people feel the business has supported them to implement recent changes, including the new curriculum, Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, different ways of planning and the Learning Journeys?**

The nurseries demonstrated outstanding practice when using and applying the previous Early Years Foundation Stage criteria. As the new framework came into effect, it learned from previous experience and built on its practices to interpret, align and apply it to its work with the children. All staff benefit from development that has engaged everyone in learning and has been tailored to people's needs and individual learning styles. Leaders and managers support this development through:

- Their own learning and development through relevant conferences that also facilitate knowledge exchange
- Using in-house expertise and specialist knowledge of managers and the Early Years Practitioner
- Providing individual and very practical advice and support for implementing learning into planning and Learning Journeys
- Building confidence and quality through practice, observation and feedback

People comment favourably about how well they are equipped with the skills needed to work with the framework and apply it in ways that are right for the children. Perhaps the strongest outcome is the way in which people use the children's Learning Journeys to identify clearly where the children are and exactly what they need to do next to continue their progress.

Some views about the support given for implementing the Framework include:

*"The evening sessions were very good – informative, lots of opportunities to ask questions."*

*"Plans now reflect what support we need to provide to help the children on their next steps."*

*"EYFS has had a huge impact – planning, Learning Journey files, staff changes"*

*"It is definitely bringing more accountability; we have helped people to put things in the right places and to see how the criteria work and fit together."*

The nurseries continue to demonstrate excellent practice in using different methodologies to monitor and evaluate what they do and to identify improvements. The approach to implementing the framework is informed through audit and observation. The move to key groups, focusing on individual needs, is a development that came out of evaluative processes.

Leaders and managers communicate very well with parent stakeholders. They welcome prospective parents into the nursery and explain the experience that their children will gain under the Framework. When their children join, they are kept up to date, not just through the Learning Journey but also through daily contact and parents' evenings. It is to the nurseries credit that even after tough times resulting from the economic downturn its intake is now rising again. People confirm that this is because of its reputation, word of mouth recommendation and referrals by staff and parents.

The nurseries positive practice in implementing the Framework could be further developed through:

- Further embedding practice in the culture and operations of the nurseries
- Making sure and evaluating how well people are understanding the links between planning, the Learning Journey outcomes and progress
- Without frightening them, ensuring that people know that the new OFSTED Inspection Framework is more challenging