

Family Learning in The Lounge

Summary

At Beattock Primary, a variety of creative approaches have been used to engage families. A successful Food for Thought bid and money from The Attainment Challenge was initially planned to help us carry out a 3-part food education project based on encouraging healthier food choices among our learners, families and the wider community.

Part 1 - We wanted to create and install a new practical cooking area with an integrated cooker within our spare classroom where learners could have access to high quality teaching and learning experiences in relation to cookery and food education. This would involve joint practical cookery workshops for learners, parents/carers and other community partners.

Part 2 - Purchase, erect, equip and maintain a new school polytunnel to grow our own fruit and vegetables with support from local businesses and community stakeholders. The produce from these would then be used for a variety of purposes (e.g. to resource our cookery classes/demonstrations, to sell within the school and community) etc.

Part 3 - Devise a progressive and coherent programme of teaching and learning in relation to parts 1 and 2, which links to relevant areas of Curriculum for Excellence (i.e. Health and Wellbeing, Literacy, STEM, etc.). This would then be built into the school curriculum and respective planning.

Impact

Our initial project evolved and our spare classroom, now with a fully functioning kitchen, developed into our nurture space, The Lounge, named by one of our pupils in a community wide competition.

The Lounge is a safe, welcoming and nurturing space for pupils and their families. Not only does it provide space for teaching and learning groups, assemblies and 'calm breaks', it has also provided the perfect environment for Baby Massage, carried out by an Early Years Scotland practitioner and Story Massage for school pupils, carried out by our in-house fully qualified Story Massage practitioner. Furthermore, its non-intimidating setting has become the home of Child's Meetings, Parent Council Meetings and is used by other services including Speech and Language Therapy. The kitchen space and home from home atmosphere allows visitors to help themselves to tea and coffee, helping them feel more at ease in potentially difficult or challenging situations.

Targeted Family Learning projects including Internet Safety workshops for pupils and their parents/carers have taken place in The Lounge. Following this, parents/carers were invited to learn alongside their children in class. Evaluations of these family learning activities were very positive with 100% parents/carers agreeing that their confidence in keeping their children safe online had improved.

Following requests from parents and along with our partners at NHS Scotland, we delivered Healthy Snack workshops for nursery – P7 pupils and their parents/carers. 100% parents/carers agreed that their confidence in preparing healthy snacks on a budget had increased. Since these workshops, we have seen a rise in healthier snacks and packed lunches.

Our parents and carers have a sense of ownership of The Lounge and are fully responsible for providing our twice weekly free Breakfast Club for pupils and their families. Almost half of our children regularly attend our Breakfast Club. Parents also run our successful Toy Library from here. The Lounge hosts Parent Council meetings and our very active members regularly use this space for their fundraising efforts. Parents/carers and families feel valued as partners in their children's learning and feel welcome in Beattock Primary School and Nursery.

Polytunnel

Our polytunnel was erected in May 2017 and training was provided to pupils, staff and parents and families by Borders Forest Trust. Parents and families have volunteered to look after our Polytunnel with one grandparent working in partnership with our nursery to run a weekly Gardening Club. We set up an 'adopt a plant' project whereby our children and their families looked after plants and vegetables over the 2018 summer holidays. Parent sent us photos of progress to our school Facebook page.

Fruit and vegetables have been successfully grown and used to cook soups, stovies, risotto, crumbles and salads. Our nursery programme, Big Cook, Little Cook provides opportunities for parents to cook with their children whilst encouraging healthy choices and providing budgeting skills.

Plants and flowers grown in the polytunnel have been planted in the community. When asked by a passer-by what they were doing, one pupil said, *'We are Beattock Primary pupils and we care for our community.'*

'It's pretty!' P1

'It's relaxing!' P2

'I like the sofas, they're comfy!' P3

'I like having Breakfast Club in the Lounge with all my friends and my mum!' P1

'I like the Toy Library, it's very good!' P4

'I like getting to cook with my class.' P4

'You can play in it and have lots of fun!' P4

'The Lounge is really nice and peaceful' P5

'I love going to Story Massage in The Lounge. It makes you feel all relaxed and calm.' P7

'Running the Breakfast Club gets me out of the house and mixing with other parents and getting to know them better. I miss nursery pick-ups and drop offs when I used to talk to other mums. The Lounge gives us a place to socialise. If I'm having a rubbish day, all the kids smiling and being polite at the Breakfast Club really cheers me up. It's great knowing that by giving them their breakfast before school; we're really making a difference.'

Parent Council member and Breakfast Club volunteer

'I didn't know what the Toy Library was going to be like to start with but now we're running it, I can see how successful it is. It's great to know that children can come and choose a toy and take it home to play with. It feels really good to be a part of that.'

Parent Council member and Toy Library volunteer

Next Steps

- Basic food qualifications training for staff and parents/carers.
- Big Cook, Little Cook extended to include school pupils and their families
- Incredible Years parenting programme for parents with children aged 3 – 6 years to support parents in their parenting role, increase their confidence and strengthen children's social skills, emotional regulation and school readiness.