

Enhancing Parental Engagement through Digital Technology

Bathgate Early Years Centre – West Lothian

Self-evaluation

Bathgate Early Years Centre transformed their approach to planning children's learning. The revised approach to planning children's learning was trialled over a two year period and saw a shift away from using ring binder diaries and documents which could only be accessed by staff in the centre, to a more inclusive digital approach which could be viewed and accessed by parents and families at home. Using digital technology to help plan children's learning has significantly improved the limited use of floor books and made way for Learning Stories. Using the [Reggio Emilia](#) approach to planning learning has also helped ensure that learning is not only visible, it also values the child's voice and contributions from home.¹

Transforming Approaches to Enhance Parental Engagement in their children's learning

Using digital technology to enhance children's learning has been at the heart of the Improvement Plan at Bathgate Early Years Centre for a number of years. The distributive leadership model for improvement at the Centre has been recognised at a local and national level as a model of good practice. Achieving the Digital Schools Award in 2017 and reaching the finals of the Scottish Education Awards (Digital Learning and Teaching category) in 2018 are only two of Bathgate Early Years Centre's accomplishments.

As part of the first phase of change, Learning Stories were converted into a PDF format, added to the Early Learning and Childcare Blog² and updated on a weekly basis. This allowed families to receive regular updates of children's learning and it welcomed contributions from home, with the added option to email information and suggestions.³ Parents reported that it helped children to remember and talk about their interests at the centre and some families were able to continue the learning at home e.g. taking their child on a visit to the farm. Learning Stories and coinciding floor books were available in the nursery on the planning wall for children and parents to access.⁴

During the second phase of change staff became aware of the importance of using the video footage which had been recorded by the children, on the iPads. The videos were played on the Smartboard and facilitated revisiting, consolidating and reshaping learning. Video clips were added to the Blog posts and this gave parents a real sense of the interactions and learning taking place in the centre.

¹ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/2018/03/14/what-are-learning-stories-at-beyc/>

² <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/>

³ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/2015/10/05/farmer-visit/>

⁴ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/2016/06/01/learning-stories/>

Children could at times struggle to hold the iPads and participate in the activities at the same time and this led to the third phase of change. A GoPro camera⁵ was purchased and QR codes were introduced⁶ which allowed instant access to children's learning. Parents report that viewing learning so immersively, through the eyes of children is invaluable and really allows them to understand the learning that is taking place at nursery. QR codes leading to Blog posts were printed onto sticky "sharing my learning" labels which children could choose to stick onto their clothing when going home. Parents were invited to scan the QR codes to find out what they had learned that day.

The fourth phase of the transformation enabled staff to explore other digital tools such as Microsoft Office 365 Sway, available via Glow, Scotland's intranet⁷ and also the use of the social media platform Twitter, linked to the Blog, to notify parents of updated posts. Staff were upskilled in Microsoft Sway and pulled together the variety of media into one central place. Learning Stories are updated in real time and can be accessed via the same QR code, which allows parents to have access to the most recent version.⁸ A learning wall for parents is located in the foyer as a reminder to access the QR codes and request their contributions from home.⁹ QR codes are also printed for children to glue into their floor books to enable them to access the Learning Story via Sway too.¹⁰

The most recent improvement to further enhance parental engagement was the introduction of individual online Learning Journals (previously paper documents). Observations are uploaded in real time allowing parents to access and respond by 'liking' or commenting. Parents can also upload photos and comments about learning from home and although only introduced this session, the response from parents has been exceptional.

Feedback from parents

"[Bathgate Early Years Centre] Regularly send pictures via Learning Journal, enjoy seeing teachers comments back."

"The digital content gives us insight into topics learned and to what depth. Also learning events within the topic e.g. meeting Rosie the lamb. It gives us shared experience to discuss with my child and the ability to better interact with staff. My child gets a sense of self and of importance when I can discuss what I have seen her do."

"I send photos for the Learners Journey when I can and make sure to comment on my child's learning outcomes so she can appreciate their importance to me. I also feel commenting must go a long way in supporting staff morale and drive within what is a hugely demanding workplace."

⁵ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/2016/12/09/documenting-learning-with-our-gopro-camera/>

⁶ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/2017/05/18/chick-cam-live-in-nursery/>

⁷ <https://glowconnect.org.uk/about-glow/>

⁸ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/2018/04/26/under-the-sea-topic/>

⁹ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/2018/03/14/ideas-from-home/>

¹⁰ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/wl/beyc/2018/06/08/world-ocean-day-at-beyc/>

“...there is plenty of opportunity to access current info but the blog and twitter are most easily accessible at any time.”

“We send in photos via email and comment on video content. Find the Learners Journey a really useful interactive resource. We also absolutely loved the Go-Pro video – this is such an innovative tool to see the child’s perspective.”

“I think you [Bathgate Early Years Centre] do an amazing job at innovating visual digital learning as a whole.”

“Feel very involved as the blog and Twitter are always kept updated.”

“I feel the digital content is excellent at the nursery.”

“Keeps me involved with what is going on with nursery, enjoy hearing and seeing what my son has been up to.”