



## Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre

### Learning Stories

As you walk round Rachel McMillan you will see Learning Stories on display. These help to celebrate the work of the children and help adults - mums, dads, carers, staff and visitors - to appreciate what learning is going on through their play. One of the ideas behind Learning Stories is to 'make children's learning visible' so we have a shared understanding about the work of nursery schools and other early childhood settings.

The concept of Learning Stories originated from the work of Margaret Carr, in New Zealand, who started to explore assessment in children's learning in a meaningful and accessible way. She identified five learning dispositions, which can be observed in the children. These are:

- Taking an interest
- Being involved
- Persisting with difficulty or uncertainty
- Communicating with others
- Taking responsibility

These are dispositions that need to be present in a child for them to make progress. At Rachel McMillan we observe these dispositions every day in the children and they are an integrated part of all that we do in the nursery to assess a child. We do not necessarily use them directly in our Learning Story format as they are implicit, rather than explicit in our work.

By using Learning Stories at Rachel McMillan we ensure that the assessment opportunities for the children are meaningful, purposeful and based on a combination of theory and practice. By making sure we are researchers as well as teachers, we take responsibility for creating the best environment for understanding how children learn. The Learning Stories are based on reciprocal relationships between staff, children, families and the environment for which we all share a responsibility.

In practice, at Rachel McMillan, each child is entitled to at least one Learning Story a year. They are undertaken either to acknowledge individual significant moments of learning or to reveal a more complex story, detailing particular patterns of play or interest that children show over time.

The process is as follows:

- The stories are written to the child, with photographs to make the situation live.

- From this the practitioner assesses the learning, looking particularly at learning dispositions, and makes links to the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- New Possibilities and Opportunities are documented, often in consultation with the child (e. what might you like to do next?) and other staff members.
- The Learning Story is read to the child.
- A copy is given to the family to take home, a copy is put in the child's Profile and a copy is put on display in the nursery.
- The mums, dads, carers and the child are invited to comment and document any links to learning at home, or add other Possibilities and Opportunities, which can inform the practice and provision in the nursery.
- The thread of listening or attunement runs as a central theme through the process.

Further reading:

Carr, M. (2001) *Assessment for Early Childhood Settings*, Sage Publications

Carr, M. and Lee, W. (2012) *Learning Stories - Constructing Learner Identities in Early Education*