

Provision for Two-Year-Olds



Daisy Chain Pre-School and Nursery, Middleton, Leeds

'Working with children at this age is incredibly demanding, but staff make it seem effortless, such is their enthusiasm'
Parent

Two-year-olds attending the Daisy Chain Pre-School and Nursery in Middleton, Leeds, are part of a vibrant family hub, and at the heart of the local community. This community feel has been vital to the pre-school's success in attracting families and two-year-olds to access funded places in a deprived area of the city. With 75 two-year-olds currently on roll, and in receipt of the free entitlement, the setting's ability to provide an inclusive environment is a strength recognised by the judges.

Part of the five-strong group Daisy Chain Childcare, the pre-school had to pull out all the stops to transform the disused Gascoigne Community Centre into a suitable site. One of the challenges it faced was transforming a large space into a welcoming environment that would not feel daunting to a young child. Part of this involved turning an old store-room into a sensory room, which included the commissioning of a hand-made Mongolian yurt to provide enclosed, cosy spaces for small group activities such as story time, and music and dance.

Parental feedback confirms that Daisy Chain has succeeded in creating a 'unique, friendly and welcoming learning environment with well-spaced activity areas', which

ensures that two-year-olds, and older age groups, feel safe and secure.

Since opening in 2014 it has welcomed many children who need extra support, including those with autism and developmental delays. It currently has two children attending who have one-to-one support throughout their sessions, carried out by experienced staff who have strong bonds with the children and their families.

Staff work with specialist autism team STARS (Specialist Training in Autism and Raising Standards) to help review and set goals for individual children. They also work with other outside agencies including a physiotherapist and speech and language therapist, and carry out audits with Family Action, a charity which helps settings identify gaps in their services.

Daisy Chain Middleton believes its success rests entirely with its staff. Strong leadership and an investment in continuing professional development are key. This commitment to training is testified to by Catherine Whitaker, early years consultant, learning improvement at Leeds City Council. 'The emotional and physical enabling environments provided at Daisy Chain ensure children's individual needs are at the centre of any developments, and as a consequence children thrive,' she

says. She adds, 'The team had a particularly trying period during the last year due to some tragic personal circumstances, but through it all remained focused and dedicated to providing the best possible experience for each child in their care.'

Parents are delighted with the care and education their two-year-olds receive. Parent Shaun Watt says, 'I believe staff at Daisy Chain Middleton have created a stable, professional, positive setting where children are supported emotionally and make exceptional progress socially and academically, through engaging and challenging activities.'

Finalists

4Children, Riverbank Nursery, Stockton
South Hills Nurseries, Salisbury
Wellies, Horncastle

Criterion

Open to early years settings, schools and childminders offering funded places for two-year-olds under the Government's programme