

Apprenticeships **CASE STUDY**

The Old School House Day Nursery

Innovative Training Partnership, ensuring Committed, Highly-Qualified Staff

Family-owned and run, **The Old School House Day Nursery** opened in 1994 and is now a thriving full-time nursery looking after 120 children from birth to five. Its fundamental aim is summed up in just two words: exceptional care. The nursery's goal is to be the best in what it does and it has built up a national reputation for its commitment to pushing the boundaries of child development and working with local early years' teams and Ofsted to ensure best practice and quality care.

Training Impact

Successful business with a national reputation – Motivated and well-trained staff

Why train?

Apprenticeships have been core to the nursery's training programme since it took on its first apprentice with Cambridge Regional College nearly 10 years ago. Three quarters of the nursery's 30 staff have been through an apprenticeship programme and each year the nursery employs five or six apprentices with a view to offering them permanent positions - the current nursery manager started as an apprentice and is now studying Early Years' Management at degree level.

Owner Linda Baston-Pitt says she is passionate about training and attributes the success of her nursery – one of the best in the country – to the innovative partnership between CRC and the Old School House, where training has been tailor-made to suit the needs of the workforce. Faced with the problem of staff unable to get to college from the nursery's rural location, CRC set up a scheme which allowed all the training to be done on site. Staff at the nursery became accredited assessors through the college, allowing the

nursery to deliver part of the training and for assessment to be carried out by qualified nursery staff as well as by CRC assessors.

Learners progress from Level 2 and 3 to management courses if appropriate, and staff with A-levels can be fast-tracked through the training programme, allowing them to progress quickly along the career path. Learners are carefully mentored and given study time – seen as a very worthwhile investment. The nursery now has its own training company, TLC, which is working with CRC to extend childcare apprenticeships to include advanced management apprenticeships in early years.

The commitment to developing the skills of staff has helped the nursery become a leader in the field of childcare and a recognised centre of excellence. Places in the day nursery are highly sought after by parents, who appreciate the advantages of well-trained, caring staff.

"We wanted to set up a link with a forward-looking educational college and our partnership with CRC has been extremely successful. The time we invest in apprenticeships is well worth it – three quarters of our current staff have been through extremely successful apprenticeship programmes.

"We believe it is all about opening up the career options for our staff. Once they have completed Level 2 and 3, we look at their management skills. We then develop training programmes with CRC which suit the needs of our workforce. It is hard to find the right people, so when we do find them we want to make sure they stay. Good training means we can retain our staff and they can grow with us."

Linda Baston-Pitt
 Director

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