

Our Self Evaluation Document June 2019

Ellingham house is a well established Day Nursery, having been operating with the same management team and with the same excellent format for the past 24 years. Hugh, the founding Principal, still remains in overall control. Lin has now retired, replaced by Sarah Parry-Norton in 2016, who is set to carry on the Ellingham House traditions whilst also bringing fresh ideas and innovation to the practice. The nursery is set in a beautiful former vicarage, originating from Georgian times, with the addition of a purpose built Pre-School area and large conservatory – to the benefit of the care we provide and to the range of experiences and opportunities we are able to offer. The house and grounds, together with our staff, provide the spirit of the nursery – with our motto, “The finest care, the greatest fun, the most encouragement” encapsulating all that we do and aspire to achieve.

We provide a genuine home-from-home environment which we feel (and 24 years experience substantiates) the children thrive in and their parents feel is the next best thing after their own care. We want the children to feel secure and loved by spending their days in an environment with consistently high standards of adult interaction and a curriculum which nurtures, inspires and guides them to fulfil their individual potential.

Most of the children join us in the Baby-Unit (2 months +) and stay with us for the next three or four years before moving on to formal education. We have age and stage related groups – from the Baby-Unit to two Toddler rooms and onto two Pre-School rooms.

We appreciate the needs of the families who live in and around Ringwood and have always endeavoured to tailor what we provide, to what is wanted for the young children of this locality (e.g. opening hours, style and ethos). Our families include a very wide range of professions in both the local area and further afield. We have always benefited from a most stable group of staff (see elsewhere for qualification profiles) many team members having been employed for many years. When we do need to fill a vacancy, we have no recruitment problems and often bring on to the team ex-placement students who have trained up to our standards. Ellingham is a well resourced and well staffed, happy nursery with a consistently and ever strengthening reputation of excellence which results in us always being busy with little need to advertise. It has always been apparent that ‘word of mouth’ has effected a full register and then it is up to us to fulfil our reputation and to value every child as an individual and take the best possible care of her/him for the next few years. This concern for each child’s individuality and worth, underpins our philosophy of inclusiveness. Presently, we have a child with highly specific special needs and note that several families using our nursery speak other languages (French, Russian and Italian) at home. We also recognise the importance of having a well trained staff, all are trained in childcare, most at level 3 and some degree level or above. All of our staff are level 3 paediatric first aid trained, with regular refreshers taking place.

Views of those who use your setting and those who work with you

We aspire for Ellingham House to be a happy, assuring and inspiring environment for the children, their parents, our staff and our visitors. We want everyone to feel that the values of our motto mean as much to us now as they did in 1995.

First impressions count for so much and we have always understood that the day needs to start well for everyone. At 8am Hugh, Sarah or Helen welcome the children in at the front door knowing parents and children by name. Despite the fact that this is the busiest time in the nursery day, we aim for a smooth, personalised transition from parent to child carer for all the babies and children. We chat, we listen, we help and arrange for individual requirements. Key people are there for the little ones and senior staff for reassurance and guidance. Our goal is for parents to head off feeling reassured and confident that their child is with friends in a caring, loving, professional family home.

We have kept all the letters and cards from parents which reflect and evidence this. They confirm the high standards which we have set ourselves and parents acknowledge our endeavours and success in achieving our aspirations. Parents will often express sadness when their child is making the transition from Ellingham to school – commenting that they would rather the ‘Ellingham experience’ didn’t have to end. At this time parents are asked to complete questionnaires on the levels of care they have experienced with us and we note any comments made. Parents often

observe that we listen carefully to specific requests and we react promptly to any anxieties such as changing a lock on a side gate. A recent request from a parent for her child to have organic milk at nursery, has been a change we've been happy to put in place for all the children.

We value our well established place in the Ringwood and Fordingbride community and we feel we are very well respected by other professionals who work with our children and their families. They are welcome to visit us at anytime and we keep ourselves involved in sharing information partnerships. When you are in an 'outstanding' provider, the scope of knowledge and experience available is what anxious parents are looking for when considering childcare options for their child.

The statutory two year old progress checks offer greater opportunities for focussed chats with parents about their child's development alongside the health visitor checks. This allows Sarah to discuss informally all the aspects of nursery life as well as development, next steps and address any worries, or offer ideas to help parents at home. We also have just held our second 'EYFS Information and School Readiness evening', this was to support parents with their understanding of how we deliver the EYFS here at Ellingham and how they can best support their children's learning at home along with school readiness ideas and guidance. We are also joined by David Cowie, a very experienced reception teacher from Ringwood School, to further support parents understanding and exceptions as their children enter their reception year. Parents commented that this was 'extremely helpful and informative' and add to the level of quality feedback our parents expect. The meeting was very well received with over one hundred parents attending. We are planning to offer more dates next year.

At the start of the day the children are eager to ring the low level front door bell when they arrive, to meet key staff and to wave goodbye to Mummy and Daddy.

We rely on our own initiatives for keeping ourselves abreast of current trends and Ofsted regulations whilst valuing the input of County staff at provider briefings, safeguarding meetings and training. We build links with other settings, Nannies and Childminders and share information regarding a child's progress and next steps. For the first time last year we entered the Ringwood carnival in September 2017, we did very well with our Mary Poppins float, securing the Jade Clarke memorial trophy and first prize overall in the carnival procession. The staff, parents and children had a wonderful day!

Effectiveness of leadership management

Our own motto means as much to us now as it did when we first penned in 1995 when Hugh and Lin founded the nursery. We wanted to develop a nursery of most high repute which set a gold standard we could be proud of and one that would become valued in the community. Twenty two years later, although we have a new manager, this is still very much the case. All our staff know how proud we are of our achievements and also that our journey is ongoing. We have encouraged all our staff to see the importance of first impressions, depths of professionalism and good communication skills.

We provide a rich learning environment for our babies and children and use the EYFS for statutory and guidance requirements. We fully understand the importance of the welfare requirements and of having sound and consistent policies. These are emphasised at staff meetings, with discussions about safeguarding. The parts of the EYFS which describe the seven areas of learning, have importance in our care routines and in the curriculum the children experience with us. This is imbued to staff whenever good practice is talked about and when we are inspiring staff to continue with their continues professional development – if a job is worth doing it is worth doing well!

Our safeguarding policy is given priority. It is explained to parents on their initial visit and new staff at induction meetings, it is reviewed regularly in full staff meetings. Staff understand about confidentiality and 'whistle blowing' and about maintaining a professional attitude at all times.

We value our staff's experience and their long-serving commitment. With ongoing CPD training, supervision, informal discussions and planned appraisals we feel supported, valued and appreciated. This is integral for all we strive to achieve.

We have a training program planned for 2019 which includes safeguarding, forest school, supporting maths and will be introducing 'ITERS and ECERS'. Two staff have completed their level 3 in childcare and three more are due to finish this year. Every member of staff is first aid trained to a paediatric level 3 with our regular first aid updates and training taking place as necessary. We also regularly evaluate all aspects of our practice to ensure we are delivering the best possible curriculum for our children.

Team building is important too and over recent years we have organised team events such as, Christmas parties, quizzes, talent shows, carnival, theatre visits, clay pigeon shooting and our regular 'Fun Day Fridays'. Senior staff meet once a month (or as necessary) to consider self-evaluation. Helen (Sarah's Deputy) expanded her role by becoming supernumerary, able to step in whenever and wherever she is needed. Sarah is then more able to lead from the front in the playrooms so staff benefit from having experience role models in their midst, from which they are positively influenced and so enhance their skills.

Hugh (Principal and owner) has always reinvested in the nursery and we have always maintained a continuous improvement program, encompassing all aspects of the grounds, fabric and resources of the nursery.

[see action plan]

Parents have been mentioned often in this document, the key to our success has been the strength of the partnerships we have forged with parents and the understanding we have for meeting their needs. This is very much a partnership as parents are included in every aspect of their child's development. As part of our ongoing commitment to communicate with our parents in a variety of different ways, we now have in place a 'Parent Mail' tech service (implemented in April 2017). This is proving to be of benefit, especially with whole nursery announcements and reminders, for example the one day nursery closure in March 2018, due to snow!

We meet as a full community every July for the annual 'Ellingham House Garden Party and BBQ' and again in December when we host our Carol service at Ellingham church. For the third year running we hold our Mother's Day tea, inviting Grandma's, Mummy's and Auntie's to join us for tea and cake. In 2017 we held a whole nursery 'Art Exhibition' which was a great success. Hugh is responsible for the twice yearly additions of 'The Ellingham Entertainer' - a form of newsletter, communication is also assisted through notice boards, information flyers, information baskets and extensive feedback from staff to parents on a daily basis.

We share information with all other providers in the form of 'sharing folders' to ensure best fit judgements are being met and to share observations and next steps. Recently, we have also shared key pages of profiles with teachers and other professionals for those who are leaving us to go onto school, our children also like to show their profiles to visiting teachers in summer months. Strong links with the local schools have been forged over the years and local young people come here for work experience placements - including ex-Ellingham boys and girls. Brockenhurst, Wiltshire College, Bournemouth and Poole College and Winchester University send us childcare students on placements with us, subsequently some become our newest recruits.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

It is rewarding to walk around the nursery, to go into each room, to spend time actively engaged with our children, we would not be succeeding in what we set out to do if we didn't see happy, relaxed faces, a busy environment and evidence of skills developing and children blossoming. Hugh and Sarah are both parents and have wanted the same things for all nursery children as they did there own, as we walk about the nursery we feel we see this, through the children's happy faces and inquisitive minds. There is a great emphasis on nurturing and helping children to manage their own feelings, they come to understand what is expected of them, our staff are fantastic role models for this, encouraging and supportive.

Our day revolves around the routines of the day, allowing the children to have a fun filled day, after the settling in period the children have some time to explore the room and play. Throughout the day the staff take care of all the children's needs and actively encourage the children to learn through play with age appropriate toys and activities. The children see their parents also interacting happily with Hugh, Sarah and all the 'Pink Ladies' in the rooms.

We keep formal planning to a minimum, Sarah is keen that staff, through observation, engage the children's interest and then plan with the help of the children on a daily basis. We very much 'plan in the moment' as we strongly feel that children learn best when they are interested and engaged. Staff are encouraged to use their initiative with developing play opportunities and to use their knowledge and expertise to offer individual next steps and to enhance learning. With age appropriate routines, and skills developing as the children grow, staff monitor any planning so that is child led and linked to next steps.

Staff are also aware of wider nursery and county data, with national trends focussing on areas for development or areas that have been highlighted as requiring more support. In the past this has been communication and language development and mathematical development. Sarah will also closely monitor Tapestry data ensuring best practice and better outcomes for our children.

We plan to note the changing seasons, new life and growth that we see here, the festivals and celebrations that help the children understand the world they live in. We embrace fundamental British values, and prevent duty, through our every day practice, supporting and encouraging the children to engage with it's ethos and it's values. Evaluation is key to providing the best possible care and outcomes for our children, evaluation of planning, children's progress, room layout, environment, staffing, activities, well being, equipment and teaching and learning. We further support this by using 'Iters' and 'Ecers' this helps us to evaluate in greater detail across the nursery as a whole and informs our nursery 'action plan'.

All our children are treated as individuals, all needing that 'little extra' at various times, this may mean a bit more reassurance, to extra support while running, jumping, climbing, to speech and language support, in fact any area of childcare.

Staff make observations and assess, then consider a child's next steps, this may be discussed with the room leader and room team, as well as the parents. Children all have individual learning journey's and Tapestry observations, these are shared with parents and parents are actively encouraged to add to these from home, we value the parents input. This year we have identified some children who have needed some support with speech and language and three children with more complex additional needs regarding communication. These are being supported by outside agencies as well as Helen (Senco) and Gilly (Senco support). Amy has identified some children in Pre school as needing PSED support, so next steps groups have been introduced and also some 1:1 support time for those needing this. We have taken note of Occupational Therapists and Teacher for the deaf, Portage workers and Speech and language therapists with different games, ideas, equipment and activities.

Throughout the nursery, in all the age groups, staff maximise time outside. We actively embrace our rural environment using 'free flow' in most rooms, and regularly go for walks in the cast grounds. With the acquisition of larger fields to allow nature rambles, a larger space to run, climb and explore. We have many new ideas for 2019, see action plan, including growing more produce in our vegetable garden and pumpkin patch (see action plan). We have added a mud pie kitchen, maths and literacy sheds and forest school activities to our outdoor learning programme. We have all-weather clothing to Pre-school resources. We have built an outdoor classroom/tree house to further enhance the outdoor curriculum. The babies can move around on the artificial all-weather grass surface and go to see our sheep, ducks, cow and pony.

Sarah constantly evaluates the children's progress as we prepare for the older children to move on to school. Analysis of the transition information for schools showed our children were in expected or above age bounds for achieving the Early Learning Goals, with several children already exceeding expectations in some areas. Our school readiness information evenings help support parents to understand the importance of school readiness skills, emphasising personal and social development.

We have nursery/parent sharing information baskets in all the rooms but we still seek to give first class feedback to the parents at the end of the day.

We have always understood the importance of the quality of the staff team and will continue to inspire, encourage and challenge them to give their best everyday to all the children. This is always a priority. Well informed and

encouraging adults will always be to the benefit of the children's learning. We use the EYFS as a discussion point in team meetings and in full staff meetings – this will continue through 2019, focussing on the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Amy and the team working in Pre-school reflect on activities and encourage children to plan and evaluate their own Pre-school activities.

Sammy and the Baby-Unit team will continue to develop provision for the babies, building upon the resources in our 'sensory' room. They make greater use and develop the resources of our outdoor all-weather soft surface artificial grass area and the shady areas of the garden, to enable our youngest children to further enjoy as much 'al fresco' time as possible.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Using the key person approach to care for young children means their needs are met in a loving and reassuring way. This is particularly important when children are first joining us in the nursery, usually in the Baby-Unit. Parents are reassured that their child will be treated as an individual and will feel very special. One of the most important factors is that parents and children get to see the same faces everyday, our staff retention is excellent with many staff returning to work with their own babies. The settling in period is crucial for babies, children and their parents and needs to be well thought through and adapted according to individual family needs. We might sometimes change a key person when the child naturally makes a choice of who he/she wants to be with.

We have always believed that the curriculum, the routines and the planning is tailored to the developing needs of an age group. The children will then generally make good progress. We have five age groups and children move to the next group when they are ready for their next steps, the transition period is not rushed. Sarah chats with key people and Room Leaders and assesses what to do next, carefully liaising with parents throughout – we all play our part in making the child eager for the challenges ahead and the good fun to be had in the new room. We are able to take our time and help children feel secure with staff, the other children and resources. We like to see the rooms buzzing with play and any mishaps quickly resolved with smiles, encouragement and words of wisdom.

An environment which conveys a 'home from home' atmosphere will give a child a sense of security. There are clear expectations of staff skills needed with specialities for each age group, room and child. We encourage children to become independent and confident as they progress their skills through the nursery, such as greater independence with self-care needs and self-serve drinks and snacks.

Because we have a stable full time staff the children know the adults well and Sarah introduces visitors to them. She reassures the children with a warm smile so that they feel safe with new people amongst them. Parents feel safe when they arrive. Hugh, Sarah or Helen opens the front door with a hearty welcome encouraging our 'house guests' to come in – it is a warm, friendly and reassuring start to the day.

When they arrive they will find there is ample space to find a quiet area to settle in, time to play with friends and to have a cuddle with a close adult. The grounds are a safe, secure and exciting place to explore and children are encouraged to be adventurous, with some risk-taking involved.

Our staff are knowledgeable about the needs of the children in their room. They encourage, explain and understand that there are different ways of learning. The tracking progress form, which shows development in the prime areas, is updated with regular observations, noting skills.

We convey healthy messages to our children and to their parents. We understand that life in the 21st century will focus on aspects of self-regulation for the welfare of the planet and for healthy living. The nursery enrolled on an eco school programme two years ago. The children learn all about the importance of recycling and preserving the environment. We took part in the Hampshire review of nursery food and nutrition, children brush their teeth and wash their hands before meals. Exercise and letting off steam is valued and the playground and garden are in constant use.

Managing feelings and behaviour is part of growing up and understanding how to contribute positively to the community, our culture is an important part of leading valued lives. We recently talked together at a staff meeting about how our children behave in nursery. We noted how important it is to maintain a consistent approach and to get the balance of life right, we encourage this through our fundamental British values. We are good role models to our children and need to make sure that through gentle guidance and encouragement, children know what is expected of them. To further support this children are encouraged to get their name on the 'values tree'. This may be for being a good friend, a kind act or thinking of others before themselves. Sarah is always telling parents how extremely proud we are of the children here, occasionally we have days when children are a little 'out of sorts' and the key is to manage those times with a confident caring approach. We are all individuals and require being treated and respected accordingly, Sarah speaks with parents about behaviour as the need arises. Sarah, Helen and Gilly support with special needs children.

Tidy up time and knowing where things belong contributes to the care of the environment; we encourage children to think about others through links with the Barnado's Toddle, Comic Relief, Children in need and World Book Day. We have even twinned our toilet with one in Burundi!

Outcomes for Children

The responsibility of providing an environment for children who may spend up to five sevenths of their waking hours for the first five years of their life here at Ellingham, have always been the utmost importance. To provide a homely, stimulating, comfortable and safe Early Years experience. We aspire to see every child as an individual, focussing on the child's interest, needs, and parental requirements. During the past three years the nursery has benefitted from an £150,000 refurbishment. In Spring 2016 we resourced, throughout the nursery, with special consideration for our continuous provision. We constantly evaluate the learning environment for our children and now actively encourage more planning 'in the moment'.

Pre-school, Conservatory and Toddlers have benefitted from a new outdoor area, including a mud pie kitchen, improved vegetation patch, literacy and numeracy sheds.

The activities and curriculum across the nursery are constantly being evaluated; we now offer a greater range of activities. Planning is done following the children's interests and ideas in younger and older toddlers, conservatory and Pre-school. There is more than 'flow' through to the next room, this ensures that children's progression is monitored, celebrated and recorded from the first day they enter Ellingham, to the day they leave us for school. Through the implementation of Tapestry, staff and management are able to quickly and effectively see the progression and areas of the curriculum in which the children flourish or the areas in which they need extra support. This allows us to plan effectively and individually for every child. We have strong relationships with support agencies. We currently have a few children with specific needs and we have noted that our reputation for loving care to all children regardless of their starting point in life, means that we have more requests for such places than we can accommodate. In recent years it is our ability as an experienced and highly skilled early years environment, to enhance the childhoods of those children facing the greatest of challenges that have been the most rewarding for us. In order that we may further improve and evaluate our service, we now hold regular senior staff meetings and twice monthly room leader meetings. This has been helpful in identifying very specific needs for each room. From January 2017, all of our staff are now first aid trained and are kept up to date with skills and innovation in first aid techniques.

Your priorities for improvement

- To continue to monitor and evaluate our continuous provision.
- To hold regular room meetings to discuss children's progress and specific needs of the team.
- To carefully consider the learning outcomes for children, making sure we are considering the needs of all.
- To build our knowledge of the outdoor curriculum and ensure the activities are suitable for all.
- To take part in regular moderator meetings to ensure the best fit judgements are consistent.

Overall effectiveness

We have well trained and caring staff, parents have trust and confidence in the practitioners who always 'go that extra mile'. There is a positive team ethos and excellent management of staff.

Through observation and tracking we monitor children's progress, the majority of children are working well within or above their expected age and stage and will often exceed their targets. Children are well cared for with consideration at all times for their wellbeing and safety. They are offered a wealth of well balanced meals and snacks ensuring every taste or need are catered for. The curriculum is rich and covers all areas of learning effectively and imaginatively. We feel that we continue to provide effective and consistent provision of the highest standard. Babies join us and before we know it they are four years old, about to embark on full time education. We see these young children as motivated learners and enthusiastic to take their next steps. At the leavers party we can stand back with pride on the four or five years they have spent with us and the individual development and learning journey that they have achieved and the solid foundations that are in place for the future. A child who left us in September came back to visit us in half term, she said "I like school, but, can I come back here now?"

Children are happy and developing skills in a loving, caring and secure environment. With a committed, long serving staff team, finding inspiration and guidance from senior, experienced management and supportive parents, we feel that we are 'getting it right'.