Visit to Kids Academy Nursery
Friday 20th February 2009

Attending:

Scrutiny Board Members
Cllr K Renshaw
S Hutchinson
I Falkingham

Scrutiny Support
Laura Nield

Kids Academy
Manal Baker

- The nursery has 117 places for 0-5 year olds, although at present they have a maximum of around 70 children at any one time.
- Children eligible for the 15 hours of term time only care are in a separate group from the others.
- The children all go on to a range of schools, including the following:
  - Holy Name
  - Holy Trinity
  - St Margaret's
  - Cookridge
  - Ireland Wood
  - Adel

- As a rule, the teachers from each primary come and visit the children in the nursery before they start school.
- The nursery also sends the school are report about every child, including their progress on each of the 6 areas of the early years curriculum.
- Parents are also provided with a more detailed profile, which is made available to the schools on request.
- The nursery staff are also often asked to go to see the Christmas play in each school
- The schools often provide feedback about how well prepared the children are for primary education
- Where schools have a staggered intake in September, the nursery work with them and with parents to look after the children until it is their turn to start school.

- None of the staff are qualified as teachers at present. However, two members of staff are taking the Foundation Stage degree. In addition, some of the other staff do have degrees, and a member of staff in the pre-school team is qualified to deliver the curriculum.
- In the past, Early Years Advisory teachers have come into the nursery to talk to staff about the curriculum. However, this no longer happens.
- It was felt that as a rule, private nurseries can't afford to employ teachers, while nurseries in schools and Children's Centres can do as they are subsidised.

- A new 'Early Years Professional' qualification is being introduced, but staff will need an existing degree to start this.
- A discussion was held around whether the private sector is adequately represented within the Early Years Department, or whether the majority of staff and policymakers had a Local Authority background.
- It was felt that a level playing field between the different sectors was essential as they are all judged on the same standards. For this to be fair, they should also all receive the same funding and support.
- It was also pointed out that there was a common misconception that private nurseries made a huge profit, whereas this was not the case.
- In addition, the standard of care in private nurseries is often high and the staff get to know parents very well. Due to the longer hours, the staff are effectively delivering the EYFS to children from 8am to 6pm every day, which wouldn't happen in other provision.

- Some children at the nursery reach the end of the Foundation Stage before they start primary school, even though technically they have another year to go.
- The one area which the nursery has found more challenging is stretching the Gifted and Talented pupils, although they are developing extended activities for the more able.
- However, there is some concern that those pupils who are more able and have reached the end of the Foundation Stage may end up 'coasting' in reception class while the others catch up. It is difficult to make a judgement about this.
- It was suggested that it may be helpful to have a simple document, such as a grid, on which progress in all areas can be easily recorded, and which follows the child.
- At present, all providers have to produce reports for primary schools covering the same areas, but these are not presented in the same format.
- Ideally, it would be helpful to have a national standard document, to cover children who cross local authority boundaries from early years to primary provision.
- It would also be helpful to develop a means of tracking children to assess the long term impact of different types of early years provision. At present this type of tracking is only in place for SEN children.