



on the grapevine



Nursery World and National Day Nurseries Association join forces for a behind-the-scenes column

WATCH OUT New electronic toys are being used to record video and speech and take photos in settings. 'Today one of our children arrived with a VTech watch on (aged three),' a practitioner told *Nursery World*.

'We had assumed it was a digital watch like the ones us dinosaurs had in the 80s. However this little girl showed us a video she had taken of her best friend in the pre-school room.'

Whispers would like to hear of anyone else who has realised that parents are giving children technology that contravenes a setting's safeguarding procedures.

CLASS DISMISSED A petition put out by School Cuts on underfunding for nursery schools said they are required to hire 'better qualified staff' and 'take on care for children with disabilities and special educational needs.'

According to NDNA the numbers of children with SEND attending PVI nurseries has risen by over 54 per cent in the last five years. After an outcry from practitioners, the wording now reads: 'Nursery schools are required to hire teachers with qualified teacher status (QTS) and thereby incur higher costs than other providers.'

Some PVI providers have refused to sign it. 'I thought we were all in this together?' said one.

TOP DOG! Nurseries in Carlisle have decided to club together and raise £5,000 to pay for a puppy to be trained as an 'assistance dog' to help support children with autism or disabilities.

Working with charity Dogs for Good, the NDNA Carlisle network are now getting their heads together to come up with fundraising events to hit their target – and a name for the pup.

One nursery manager said, '£5,000 means that we can name the puppy, receive information about its progress and actually meet it!'

EYFS training: part 6 – physical development

Get physical

What are the training opportunities for practitioners on physical development, and how can provision in this area be improved? By **Charlotte Goddard**



- Although PD is one of the EYFS prime areas, training is hard to come by
- There are proposals to narrow the PD Early Learning Goals to focus on motor skills, but training should be wider
- Training must encourage practitioners to embed PD in all aspects of a setting

Physical development is a prime area of learning, but in its most recent annual report, Ofsted suggests good practice is stifled in some settings by undue concerns about risk and safety. The provision of high-quality training in this area is vital, says Anne O'Connor, consultant and trainer at Primed for Life.

'There are aspects of children's PD that are crucial to their overall physical and emotional wellbeing as well as their learning,' she says. 'Not only is it intrinsically linked to the development of the other prime and specific areas, it is also increasingly evident that children's physical development is at risk through a variety of environmental and societal factors. Training in PD should be a statutory requirement to address this.'

However, suitable training courses are

difficult to find, says Ivana Beckett, manager of St Vincent's Nursery in Altrincham, Manchester. 'We've focused on PD for more than a year,' she says. 'With childhood obesity increasing, we thought "let's do something about it". But we found it almost impossible to track down any training.'

The EYFS Statutory framework says settings must provide opportunities to be active and interactive; and to develop co-ordination, control and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

The physical development Early Learning Goals, which children must meet by the end of the EYFS, are divided into Moving and Handling, and Health and Self-care. Children must be able to show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements, move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space, and handle equipment effectively. They must also understand the importance of physical exercise, and a healthy diet, and be able to manage their own hygiene and personal needs. Under the new goals being piloted, Moving and Handling and Health and Self-care are replaced with 'gross motor skills'

and 'fine motor skills'. Food, hygiene and personal needs have moved to another goal.

Whatever happens with the ELGs, 'the fundamentals of physical development will always be relevant, above and beyond any changes to the framework', says Ms O'Connor. 'At Primed for Life, one of the key aspects of our approach to CPD is helping people understand the important link between children's bodies and the development of their brains – and the crucial role of movement, play and dance in developing both.'

Good-quality training should match scientific theory to real-life practice. 'We find the best way to make the theory stick is to provide lots of opportunities for practitioners to get down on the floor and play with movement,' says Ms O'Connor. 'This might involve lying on their backs and exploring what is involved in rolling onto their tummies or having races on hands and knees. Afterwards, everyone comments on just how hard babies and toddlers work to get around!'

Trainers find that practitioners often have a number of gaps in their knowledge when it comes to physical development. Beliefs that often need to be challenged include the idea that PD will 'just happen', that it needs to take place outdoors, and that expensive resources are required. 'We find that practitioners and parents are often not aware of the importance of sensory processing as an aspect of physical development and in particular, proprioception and the vestibular system,' says Ms O'Connor.

Proprioception is a sense of self-movement and body position, while the vestibular system provides our brain with information about motion, head position, and spatial orientation. 'These two senses play a huge and essential part, not just in physical development, but also emotional wellbeing and cognitive learning,' Ms O'Connor explains. 'Similarly, the importance of the developmental movement stages from the womb until a child begins to walk – including creeping and crawling – is often not recognised.'

Some 22 staff at St Vincent's Nursery took part in training delivered by Manchester-based trainer Sharon Skade, who has developed an early years accreditation scheme called Physical Development Champions. The three-hour course took place from 6-9pm at the nursery. 'You worry about staff switching off after they have done a full day of work,' says Ms Beckett. 'But Sharon makes it fun. There were loads of activities, and she brought lots of resources.'

The team were asked to plan an activity using items such as obstacles, hoops, cones and balls. 'Then we thought about how it would go if we delivered that activity to the children,' says Ms Beckett. 'What if it was a

completely new resource the children had never seen? We discovered the children might have different ideas about how they wanted to use the equipment. You let children explore the resource themselves, then, when it is less of a novelty, bring it into planned activities.'

Now St Vincent's gets children to write their names lying on their tummies. 'We were also talking about how children should have the opportunity to walk around in their bare feet and we now include that in our routines; we put sand on the floor instead of in trays, for example,' says Ms Beckett.

Expert view: **Dr Lala Manners, director of Activematters and member of the Ofsted Early Years Pedagogy and Practice Forum**

'Providing quality PD training is tricky, mainly because we don't have an agreed baseline level of knowledge or necessary practical skills in the field. There is scarce funding, and opportunities are not easily available. I know of five excellent trainers lost to the sector in the last year because of funding cuts. There are some pockets like Startwell Birmingham that has funding for the next five years – but this is rare.'

'Some colleagues and I are creating a 15-hour, five-module Open University course, which will be free to access and hopefully establish a baseline level of underpinning knowledge. We aim for this course to eventually be mandatory.'

'The Characteristics of Effective Learning fit perfectly with PD, but the proposed changes to the Early Learning Goals will be disastrous. Taking 50 per cent of PD – Health and Self-care – and placing it under Self-Management means training can only focus on the most obvious element of PD, gross and fine motor skills. This completely ignores essential aspects such as diet, rest, screen time, the role of the environment and play opportunities inside and outdoors.'

'The Ofsted Early Years Pedagogy and Practice Forum, which has had three meetings so far, has created a document that will support inspectors on physical development, suggesting what to observe and possible questions to ask. While the ELGs will still rely on ticking boxes, Ofsted's new emphasis is on inspectors really talking to practitioners, asking questions like "How does the environment you have created support physical development?"'

'Practitioners need to be role models, so training must include an effective element of self-care. Good training will also emphasise threading PD opportunities throughout the day, rather than relying on things like the Daily Mile – I don't like the idea of children going round in circles, there are other more interesting and effective things to do.' ■

training

PrimedforLife Anne O'Connor offers training courses and workshops.

→ <https://www.primedforlife.co.uk>

I Like to Move It, Move It This half-day course delivered by Tamsin Grimmer includes a review of research into movement play and its positive impact.
<http://tamsingrimmer.co.uk/home/training/i-like-to-move-it-move-it>

Child Development 3: Motor Skills This three-hour online NDNA course helps practitioners support children showing signs of difficulty with PD
→ <https://bit.ly/2WP2Jml>

Early Years Movement Skills (Levels 1-3) The skills required for practitioners to produce their own activities.
→ www.musicandmovement.org.uk/cpd-training

guidance

Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age World Health Organization guidelines.
→ <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/311664>

UK Physical Activity Guidelines Guidance from the Chief Medical Office includes two fact-sheets.
→ <https://bit.ly/1iAwQ0x>

resources

Activematters
→ <https://www.activematters.org>

The Early Years Movement Handbook: A Principles-Based Approach to Supporting Young Children's Physical Development, Health and Wellbeing by Lala Manners.
→ <https://amzn.to/2INMADE>

Moving Right from the Start: The importance of physicality in the early years (Early Years Alliance).
→ <https://bit.ly/31D4fGQ>

Understanding Physical Development in the Early Years: Linking bodies and minds by Anne O'Connor, Anna Daly.
→ <https://amzn.to/2MQJ2G5>

A Moving Child is a Learning Child by Gill Connell and Cheryl McCarthy.
→ <https://amzn.to/2MPZF1a>