

Spotlight on Children's House Nursery School

Children's House Nursery School was the winner of the 2018 Early Years Setting of the Year Award at the Shine a Light Awards.

At Children's House Nursery School, great changes are taking place every day – and our Shine a Light judges were seriously impressed by the results.

Located in Tower Hamlets, London, within an area of high deprivation, over 90% of children starting at this nursery have significant speech and language delays. Remarkably, by the time they move on to primary school, these same children leave with the level of skill expected for their age and stage of development.

The school's head teacher, Chris Lewis, believes this is due to her staff's dedication to parental engagement and the implementation of the National Literacy Trust's initiative Early Words Together. School staff work closely with parent volunteers and volunteers from business and industry to raise achievement in language, communication and literacy.

Through working in partnership with families, staff and volunteers inspire and motivate parents to improve the home learning environment because parents can make all the difference to their child's communication skills. Increasing parental awareness of the importance of early language makes a huge difference, families feel empowered to support their child's communication and early literacy.

Before they even start at nursery staff identify any specific needs that children may have with special 'Stay, Play and Learn' sessions, following which a programme of support is implemented. Parents of children on the nursery's waiting list are also given the opportunity to attend informative courses, which emphasise the importance of talking, reading and playing with children at home.

It is testament to the nursery's excellent reputation that local children's centres, health visitors and speech and language therapists (SLTs) regularly make direct referrals to Children's House.

Moreover, the nursery is partnered with a diverse range of professional organisations, including the National Literacy Trust. It has also cultivated informal relationships with arts-based bodies such as the Tate and the Trinity/Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

The Shine a Light judges were unanimous in declaring Children's House Nursery the winner for the *Early Years Setting of the Year Award*, believing it to be a fantastic example of what Early Years settings can do through long-term commitment and engagement with parents and the wider community. As judge Malcolm Reeve, Director of Firmament Education said, "the parental side shows through – that's really important at such an early stage."

Fellow judge Teresa Redmond, Lead Professional Advisor at The Communication Trust, applauded the nursery's "imaginative approach to supporting young children, not just using interventions and training, but offering training for parents and an enriched curriculum." Along with the rest of the panel, she felt that they demonstrated "a true understanding of what underpins language development."

For further information about the 2018 Shine a Light Awards visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk and follow us on Twitter #awards_SAL