

**Building confidence
and whole-setting
practice in an early
years nursery**



Setting: Hambledon Nursery School

Role interviewed: Headteacher

Programme: Early Years Development Programme (EYDP)

The starting point

When a child with Down syndrome joined Hambledon Nursery School, the team had not previously supported a child with this learning profile.

They wanted to ensure they were providing the right support from the outset – both for the child and for staff across the setting. The team were looking for guidance that would help them better understand how children with Down syndrome learn, alongside practical strategies they could apply in everyday practice.

Why DSUK's EYDP?

The Early Years Development Programme offers a structured way to build knowledge and confidence, with access to training, resources and ongoing support.

The team valued having expert guidance available when they needed it, alongside the flexibility to revisit training and explore specific areas in more depth over time.



Putting EYDP into practice

EYDP was used as a whole-setting resource, supporting staff learning and shaping day-to-day practice.

Building staff confidence and understanding

Staff accessed the regular online support sessions and used the programme to develop their understanding of the Down syndrome learning profile, including communication, social learning and associated needs.

This helped the team feel more confident in how they approached teaching and learning, and how they adapted expectations for the child.

Supporting communication through meaningful resources

The team introduced a 'My Talking Bag', allowing the child to bring meaningful items between home and nursery to encourage communication and shared interaction.

The team also created personalised resources, including visual talking prompt books using photographs of the child's family.

These approaches helped support speech and engagement in a way that was motivating and relevant to the child.

Working in partnership with families

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Developing inclusive practice across the setting

The programme also supported wider changes in the setting's inclusive practice.

Staff introduced Makaton symbols across the environment to create a more communication-friendly space. Team members also accessed Makaton training to build their skills further.

The setting marked Down Syndrome Awareness Month and World Down Syndrome Day, helping to raise awareness and create a more inclusive culture for all children.

Ongoing support

Having access to recorded webinars and the option to attend live sessions allowed staff to revisit learning when needed and ask questions relevant to their setting.

This flexibility meant the programme could be used over time, rather than as a one-off training experience.



Impact on the setting

Through EYDP, Hambledon Nursery School developed greater confidence in supporting a child with Down syndrome and strengthened their inclusive practice across the setting.

Staff felt better equipped with both the knowledge and practical tools needed to support learning, communication and independence.

The programme supported not just individual strategies, but a more consistent and informed approach across the whole team.



We had not had a child with Down syndrome before, so EYDP gave us the support and understanding we needed to feel confident and adapt our practice.

Would they recommend EYDP?

Yes. The Headteacher shared that EYDP provided valuable support, practical resources and accessible training that could be used flexibly by the whole team.

For settings with limited prior experience of supporting children with Down syndrome, it offered a clear and supportive starting point, alongside ongoing guidance as confidence and understanding developed.



If you would like to discover more about
our Early Years Development Programme,
please contact:

education@downsyndromeuk.co.uk

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T: 0330 111 2121

E: info@downsyndromeuk.co.uk

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