

Smarties and Smartcare Limited were awarded the '**Platinum award**' (the highest award achievable), by Quality Counts during December 2018. Quality Counts is a national quality scheme designed to help a nursery to explore all aspects of its care and education to ensure that it is delivering the best possible service for young children.

Quality CountsTM

NDNA Platinum

Quality Counts assessment feedback

Feedback for section 1- Play and Learning

This nursery promotes and embraces child led, knowledgeable and skilled staff, who engage and interact with children as they play in a superb, well resourced, planned environment both indoors and outdoors. It is equipped to meet the needs, interests and stages of development of each child. This pedagogical approach inspires staff to spend their time scaffolding children's learning across the setting, allowing children to make choices but also being responsive and spontaneous when children suddenly abandon activities and follow their interests. This enabling environment allows children to explore and learn and take risks, fostering their physical, intellectual, social, emotional and language development. Staff build children's trust, confidence and independence supporting their social and emotional well-being, whilst assessing and extending learning to involve development of their language and communication skills.

I have had the pleasure to observe happy, joyful, relaxed and well cared for children who appear to be making great progress supported by exceptional leadership and staff who are enthusiastic, inspired and portray a love for their job. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is well-embedded as staff are well qualified, trained and experienced to prepare children for transition to a school environment, encouraging them to think critically and problem solve. Children's understanding of the natural world is exemplary and the environment allows for seamless transitions both indoors and outdoors with well deployed staff to make it happen.

The Owner/Manager of the setting exudes a quality of passion, care and learning to children and families in the early years that also includes parents as partners and other agencies ensuring the outcomes for children are optimistic.

Those children and families who require additional support are surrounded by a culture where parents/carers are involved from the beginning; children are included in activities (some recommended by other professionals) and integrated into the group. Staff and parents set goals and reviews take place to ensure intervention plans are effective.

Feedback for section 2 Health, Safety & Wellbeing

The nursery promotes a culture where health, safety and well-being of both children and staff is exemplary. The health, safety and well-being culture is driven through a framework of outstanding leadership and management underpinned by excellent robust policies and procedures, particularly Safeguarding and SEND. The nursery is EYFS compliant and rises above the minimum staffing ratios required for children: staff. The nursery boasts key supernumerary posts allowing time and effort to coach, mentor, train and offer information to all staff to the highest standards. On the day of my visit, the Owner/Manager included the Trainee Manager and Deputy in the assessment as part of her approach to succession planning - coaching, mentoring and prompting them as the day progressed.

Skilled, knowledgeable staff support a highly effective, structured learning approach to the whole group, key groups and individual children. Staff provide an enabling learning and care environment which meet the needs of a range of children, including disabled children and those who have additional needs.

Observations of practice show that practitioners have warm, caring relationships with all the children in the setting, staff listen carefully to what children are saying and use open-ended questions allowing time for them to consider what has been said and speak. Staff praise children and show pleasure regarding their observations. Staff are consistent in their approach to children's care, personal hygiene and safety. My observations of practice matched that of their policies and procedures.

Observations on the day showed that staff act as exceptional role models and expected levels of child development were integrated in their attitudes to behaviour. They are responsive to children's needs, feelings and moods and intervene appropriately when sharing or playing breaks down.

It is clear from conversations, information, minutes of meetings, policies and procedures that there are excellent links with multi-agencies and parents. It is clearly evident that parents and children's views are sought and make a positive impact on services delivered.

Healthy eating practices are excellent for both children and staff, the nursery have recently received a 5* rating for food and hygiene. There is an in house cook who provides a balanced diet, menus are displayed for parents to see and a cook book of recipes has been developed and readily available for parents and staff. Dietary allergies and religious or cultural preferences are catered for.

Feedback for section 3 – Leadership and Management

Leaders and managers display an ambitious vision and create high expectations for what children can achieve and strive for outstanding practices at all times. The Owner/Manager model's exceptional leadership and her practice is mirrored by her Trainee Manager and Deputy Manager. There are clear lines of accountability including responsibilities and reporting lines relating to all positions in the setting.

Her Business Plan demonstrates robust long term, medium term and short-term planning for the future sustainability of the nursery, she has future ambitions to develop more links within the community including greater interaction with elderly people. The physical environment is exemplary and organised to meet the needs of individual children of different ages, including babies and toddlers. As a nursery they have decided together to put into a policy that they will no longer buy plastic toys unless they are unable to source the resource in any other material.

She provides excellent packages of in-house training and her training budget is stated to be very generous. There is a culture and drive by all staff for continuous on-going quality improvements, this is underpinned by robust self-evaluation practices, reflection on what needs improvement and planning for further developments. Practitioners and Apprentices are monitored, coached, mentored and supported to a high standard and under performance is tackled.

She successfully implements a comprehensive range of policies and procedures and her style of leadership and management is inspiring, allowing her staff to take ownership of their work creating motivational staff who take pride in their achievements. Her leaders and managers are an integral part of staffs professional development and the settings policies and procedures underpin everyday practice, they are an integral part of induction, supervision, staff meetings, training and continuous professional development.

The leadership and management team have excellent robust systems for assessing children, there is evidence of tracking for both individual children and cohorts of children. There is a system for moderating assessment so that leaders and managers know it is reliable. The Local Authority share this with other settings as good practice.

The Owner/Manager is a key part of local groups sharing learning, best practices and is fully aware of any proposed national or local changes that may impact on the setting viability. She works with the local authority, schools, other agencies and organisations such as the NDNA. The Owner/Manager represents the NDNA local group.

Feedback for section 4 - Workforce

The pursuit of excellence in all of the settings activities is embedded in staffs attitudes and expectations. There is a highly successful drive by all to gain the highest achievement for all children creating a positive impact on outcomes for all children.

Leaders and Managers have created a culture of vigilance where children's welfare and safety is actively promoted. Children and parents are listened to and staff are well trained to identify and support children who may be at risk of neglect or abuse. Work with partner agencies to safeguard children's welfare is effective.

Leaders and managers rigorous performance management, supervision, and highly focused professional development are well embedded and are monitored to make sure they happen at regular intervals. All those responsible for managing staff have extensive training on how to manage staff and deal with under performance. Leaders and Managers are supernumerary and have roles and responsibilities to support and challenge practitioners to develop reflective practice and good self-awareness.

There is a training plan for each individual, based on individual needs, peer to peer reflection, results from cohort tracking, succession planning and any external evaluation including inspection.

The Owner/Manager has excellent knowledge of the requirements for the EYFS and implements them effectively. There are highly effective recruitment processes based on legal requirements, the current situation and any future vision.

There are highly effective partnerships with parents, at least 100 positive and meaningful testimonials were submitted to the NDNA as part of their application for the Nursery of the Year Award 2018. They were successful in achieving "Overall Winner".

Award Given Level 3 - Platinum

