

Parents, Early Years and Learning: Practice example

Visits further
afield:
The Science
Museum

At **South Acton Children's Centre, Ealing** small groups of parents, children and staff (8–10 families) have a day trip to the Science Museum in London.

This requires careful forward planning so that parents can arrange time off work or college and get care organised for younger siblings.

Places and dates are booked at the beginning of the year so that a specific time in The Garden and Pattern Pod (rooms especially designed for under fives) are reserved.



*Papa, can you
take me again.*

☺ Not go before. I like the big trains, the cars, the aeroplanes. I really enjoy day. ☺

Staff have to work hard to seek out and talk to individual parents, establish the value of the outing, and give reminders of the date and times.

Before the trip, children look at photographs of previous trips to the Science Museum and talk about what they might see and do.

Parents are encouraged to come to a preparation session, which is held early in the morning of the same day.

Taking only a small group with two members of staff means that the trip is relaxed, with plenty of time for talk. It's not like a traditional 'school outing'. It's more like a 'family and friends day out'.

These visits have been particularly successful in attracting fathers' participation.

It's important for at least one member of staff to be child-free so that they can mix with parents and children, model positive talking and observation with children, and generally help the day go smoothly.

Digital photographs are taken of the trip on the tube, walking through the tunnel at South Kensington and of the action in the museum itself.

These images are displayed the following morning, either as photographs in the reception area or as a slide show on a computer or interactive whiteboard.

Displaying the images in this way can be particularly effective in generating talk amongst both children and parents. It provides immediate feedback for children and encourages other parents to take an interest and participate themselves in future events.

Parents say that the visits give them confidence to take children to places such as museums. Entering large public buildings can be intimidating. Many parents are surprised to find that young children are welcome and that entry is free. Some make a return trip to the Science Museum with their children.



On return to nursery, the photographs are used to recall and describe the experience, to make books and displays together. Interests expressed by the children on the day can be followed up – for example by planning to make marble runs or to look at patterns, water flow, shadows and pulleys.

Parents who can come into the setting can be involved in these follow-up activities. Others can take photographs home, help their children remember the day and write simple captions. They can also help to translate captions into home languages ready for display.

Other outings further afield have included trips to urban farms, Heathrow Airport and the Natural History Museum.

The visits also serve to build relationships and knowledge. Parents form friendships with each other, they feel more confident in talking to staff and they experience different ways of relating to children. Staff also gain insights into the family life of each child.

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