

Toy library



“When I was offered the chance to become involved in the toy library I jumped at it. It’s an excellent opportunity to build relationships with parents. The families I support have greatly benefited from being able to borrow educational toys that encourage them to interact as a family.”

Home-school support worker

Selby North Children’s Centre, North Yorkshire, has set up a toy library and stocked it with around 70 items that support all areas of learning and development.

The books, toys and games support parents and carers to have fun with their children, as well as to help them learn at home.

Parents and children can browse toys and resources in the setting and choose one to take home. A simple tracking system allows staff to ‘check out’ and ‘check in’ the resources as they are borrowed and returned.

At the same time, parents and carers have an opportunity to talk to members of staff about their child’s learning and next steps. In this way, the toy library project is helping to improve relationships between parents and practitioners, as well as between parents and children.

The setting has taken the opportunity to invite the home-school support worker from the primary school to join the project. This

Parents and families can borrow:

- ‘small world’ toys (e.g. train, zoo and farm sets)
- role-play toys and sets, with books and tabards (e.g. doctor’s bag, toolkit)
- word games
- counting games
- board games
- outdoor play bag
- books with CDs and/or character puppets
- investigation bags, including magnets, colour, gardening, water and bugs
- musical instruments and sound-makers.



“It’s fantastic. You can borrow toys and bring them back, so they’re not getting bored of the same thing.”

“We’ve been up since seven o’clock this morning playing the game! He knows how many spots are on the dice now without counting!”

“I know what she’ll be doing when she comes home! It encourages them, doesn’t it?”



‘joined-up working’ is proving invaluable. The home-school support worker has focused on building relationships with parents: she introduces herself over coffee/refreshments and supports less confident parents to choose and borrow resources. In this way the setting is able to focus on families they feel would benefit from additional support and encouragement.

What impact is the toy library project having?

Parents are extremely positive about the toy library. They clearly recognise the value of being able to borrow a wide range of toys and resources that they can enjoy with their children. The children have also been very excited when talking about the games and books they have taken home, and they really enjoy playing with mum or dad.

Over half of all families in the Foundation Stage use the library on a regular basis. Some of the less confident parents have been quick to get involved, including four families who have never engaged with the Centre before.

Now parents are playing a much greater role in planning their children’s learning, in partnership with practitioners. Some very positive discussions have taken place.



Conversations are not always just about the toys or resources that are being borrowed. For example, one staff member talked with a parent about helping her child to learn to put on her coat, and a few days later the child was able to do this independently.

It appears that once the toy library has ‘inspired’ families, parents may begin to interact more with their children in all kinds of other ways too. Parents are keener to talk *with* their child and *about* their child’s learning.

The Centre staff are extremely pleased with how the project is going and feel it is making a positive contribution to the home learning environment for many of their children.

“We have taken important steps forward with many parents and are keen to build on these to ensure that children get a truly good start to life.”