

Josephine, The Single Mum

My relationship with Dorking Nursery and children's centre began way back in 2001 with my daughter. I was a single mum aged 23 and had started my degree. The huge support the nursery gave me - along with the reassurance that my daughter was in an amazing and stable environment to start her education- enabled me to complete my degree and better myself for our future. This benefitted us financially and emotionally.

With government funding, my daughter had previously been in private nursery care but in that particular setting she was unhappy and I felt that the care was more focused on the parent's needs than the child's. This was a total contrast to Dorking Nursery School and Children's Centre, where most play is child-led and the expertise of the staff mean that children learn to their potential. Now eighteen, my daughter is about to start university and I like to believe that watching me complete my education inspired her to make the decision to do a degree herself and progress forward.

Jo and Paul the Pirate

Fast forward to 2016 and I am making the journey to nursery again with my two boys aged two and four. My eldest son spent a year at another local nursery and I am thrilled he is now at Dorking Nursery School.

He has an Autumn birthday and a thirst for learning new things. This can sometimes lead to frustration for my son but the positivity of the staff combined with their teaching experience means they can teach him the social skills that he needs to progress on to school alongside the more traditional learning of numbers and letters that he loves (as well as dressing up, making mud pies and being a pirate)!

I cannot wait for him to start school because I can already see what a natural progression this will be for him.

Jo and Peter

My youngest son has speech and language delay. I had concerns about him around a year ago and discussed these with the staff at the children's centre while at a drop-in session. I was sign posted to my health visitor who secured relevant medical appointments for us

which then lead to speech therapy and a place at the 2-3's nursery given due to his special needs. My son, now aged 3 ½ cannot yet speak more than two words at a time. It is clear to see that all the staff at the nursery adore my son and can all sign with him or pick up on his needs in other ways, using pictures or just by knowing him well enough to understand his sounds. These techniques have helped encourage his speech so much.

Without the huge support and determination of his key workers, who are all early years specialists, I do not believe my son would have progressed as much as he has today.

Moreover, Peter has been given support with his social skills, ensuring he is included in playtime with his peers. By doing this, his teachers ensure he can play alongside others and be the best that he can be. Teachers and staff have listened to any concerns I've had and put things in to place to help reassure and aid me. For example, we use a book on a daily basis to keep track of what my son has been doing at nursery or home so that we can have conversations around it. Without this I wouldn't know what he got up to as he physically cannot tell me. It feels such a relief to have all this support and not feel we are doing everything on our own. My son, a happy, smiley and intelligent little boy loves his time at nursery and it seems like everybody knows what he needs despite his struggle with speech – but it takes a lot of coordination, knowledge and teamwork to make it happen. He has been put forward for a place in the speech and language unit next term and I hope this boost will mean he will be able to follow his brother to a main stream school the following year. Without the gentle support and sign posting from the children's centre, my sons issues would almost certainly not have been picked up on for another year. This valuable extra year of nursery education is all I could have wished for.

I have three very different children and the Dorking Nursery School and Children's Centre not only support my family at every point in our journey, but it excelled and surpassed my expectations. The focus on the individual is way beyond what I have experienced at other nurseries. I know that children in other settings do not receive the same 'above and beyond' level of support. I have absolute trust in every staff member to do the best for my children and feel quite emotional about how lucky we are to have them in our lives. The staff strive to understand and deal with almost every type of child, parent and situation that enters their community. What could be more important than that?