

Early Years Professional/ Early Years Teacher of the Year



**Laura Maguire, Dukes
and Duchesses, Liverpool**



**'Clear evidence of impact on
children and families – goes
above and beyond.'**
Judge

Laura Maguire joined the team at Dukes and Duchesses as a 16-year-old apprentice, just a month after leaving school. Despite her youthfulness, her professionalism and caring nature were recognised early on in her career.

Laura shadowed more experienced members of staff and within two years became a room leader. Keen to develop her skills and knowledge she gained an early years degree at Edgehill University and became an Early Years Professional in 2012. She was the first member of her family to gain a degree.

After 12 years, she is now a deputy manager, SENCO and student mentor. She is also a cluster chair of the Early Years Childcare Consortia set up by Liverpool City Council, and meets with colleagues monthly to review cases and share best practice and models of intervention that have had a positive impact.

The nursery is in a deprived area of Liverpool but Laura ensures through her planning that no

child is excluded because of their background. She has also supported children in difficult circumstances, providing consistency and support. In one case, this was for a family struggling to clothe their children, to whom she sent bags of clothes home, which were well received. She also pushed for a referral for the children, because language and communication were a concern. Laura's work with this family has led to a more stable environment for the children, the family are beginning to thrive and a speech and language package of support is now in place.

Another child was a selective mute. Laura and the family decided to pursue a different route to that suggested by the speech therapist and gradually through Laura's plan that involved meeting the family in the park, the child began to communicate.

One parent talking about Laura's role as a key person for her daughter explains how she was able to support her daughter's speech and

language development. 'Laura and the team organised the room so that she felt at home, giving her little spaces to sit and watch from, or making dens out of sheer material so that she could talk without feeling under pressure... I would wholeheartedly support this award for Laura because she goes that extra mile and is an excellent role model.'

Laura's practice is exemplary – observed at the nursery's last Ofsted inspection, her teaching was described as 'inspirational'. Jane McHale, the early help SEN officer at Liverpool City Council, explained how Laura organises the early years consortia meetings, which involve supporting the PVI sector to co-ordinate support for children with SEND with advice from the Early Help SEN team. 'Laura has been involved from the initiation of these arrangements and her skills and knowledge in this field shine...Her empathy and commitment to families is reflected in the way that they talk about the nursery.'

Highly commended **Sarah Fillingham, Portico Day Nurseries**

Sarah Fillingham has worked at Portico Day Nurseries since November 2002, starting just as the company was established. As an NNEB with lots of experience and enthusiasm she was the natural choice for deputy manager. As a manager she became an EYP after completing an Early Years Foundation

Degree, spending evenings studying.

Described as one of the nursery group's most valued employees by the directors, Sarah was the natural choice when the company needed a new area manager. One of the group's managers says, 'Without the outstanding support I receive from Sarah, I can honestly say I don't think I would have become the manager I am today. Sarah's passion, dedication and inspiration are like a breath of fresh air and with her guidance we can all thrive.'

Finalist

**Amanda Boocock,
Little Green Rascals, York**

Criterion

Nominees must have gained Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) or Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) through one of the recognised pathways.