

Nursery Practitioner of the Year



Lucy Jakeways, Busy Bees Nursery, Kettering

'If Lucy were a stick of rock, she would have "outstanding, passionate practitioner" written through her'
Colleague

Lucy Jakeways has an extremely active role not just as senior room manager in her 48-place pre-school, but also in the implementation and development of the EYFS across the nursery in her role as childcare curriculum leader.

She leads the nursery at the annual Kettering Carnival, planning and co-ordinating the trip as well as designing the nursery's float and putting resources, risk assessments, lorries and team of loyal supporters in place to ensure the day goes without a hitch.

In celebration of the Queen's birthday this year, Lucy helped the children create a float filled with handmade props and displays on the theme of the Royal family and the city of London. The float won first prize and the nursery became the proud recipient of the carnival cup for the first time.

As a result of the years she has put in to supporting the local carnival, Lucy has now been asked to join the carnival committee, which

also provides her with well-deserved recognition of her work within the community.

She has also taken the initiative to lead her own projects within the nursery setting. At the beginning of 2016, Lucy decided to create a new outdoor area for children.

Although there was no budget in place to support her, Lucy was not deterred, and had a plan drawn up and put on display for parents to view, add comments and offer help. Several gave up time over their weekends or offered wood and other resources to help make Lucy's idea a reality.

She co-ordinated the group of parent volunteers to clear the outdoor space of rotten trees, bushes and weeds, and managed to secure donations including planks of wood to make the sides of new planter beds, top soil to fill them, large and small cable reels for tables and chairs, bark chippings to cover the whole area, and pallets to make fencing around the edges.

The garden was opened to the nursery staff and children in February 2017. As soon as the garden was finished, Lucy set up a 12-month gardening club to ensure the children would get maximum benefit from the area. They have already been able to harvest radishes and onions, and are learning from and experiencing first-hand the benefits of outdoor learning available on their doorstep.

The next stage of the project is already under way as Lucy now plans to develop the rest of the land into a Forest School experience.

As well as educating and informing the children in her care, Lucy also takes time for her own personal learning and development, and has studied for a foundation degree and BA in early years. She is currently working on her leadership and management NVQ.

A colleague describes her as 'hard-working, committed and always going that extra mile for the children and nursery. It's not just a job to her but a way of life, and she gets great satisfaction from seeing the children develop and grow into confident little people with a passion for learning.'

She adds, 'If Lucy were a stick of rock, she would have "outstanding, passionate practitioner" written all the way through her'

Highly commended

Ami Mahon, Elmscot Day Nursery, Timperley

Ami joined Elmscot as a room practitioner, but was promoted to room senior and then deputy manager in two years.

She also works as SENDCO for the group, working closely with other settings and outside agencies, and developing a staff library section devoted to working with children with SEND.

Ami regularly represents Elmscot at large conferences, whether on the benefits of early intervention or on the importance

of work placements and apprenticeships. She attends many recruitment events and works with students at Trafford College on apprenticeship schemes and putting theory into practice.

She is also dedicated to furthering her knowledge by attending training courses and looking for new approaches on social media and in articles.

One testimonial praised Ami's ability to 'think outside the box.'

'To some, they see a box, but to Ami, it could be anything! Ami instils this thinking not only in the children in her care, but also the teams she leads.'

Finalists

Nicole Kingst on, Dizzy Ducks Day Nurseries

Chris Withington, Kiddi Caru Day Nursery, Torquay

Criterion

Open to qualified practitioners in an early years setting in the maintained, private or voluntary sectors