

when listening to music and when playing the instruments. Bianca made a video for Dawn and Neil, showing Bella taking a lead in the group, enthusiastically shaking the maracas and moving her body to the music.

When they read stories in the group, Bella also revels in the rhyme and rhythm of the words. Her favourite is Julia Donaldson's Room on the Broom and she cannot resist calling out 'Down,' said the witch' before Bianca reads that line.

She also loves making up nonsense words that may rhyme, sometimes sound a bit rude and often make the other children laugh. 'Vroom, doom, kaboom, shoom,' she says and Ben uses this teachable moment to encourage all the children to think of 'oom' words, writing them on the white board then later printing them out in large letters for a display.

Bella knows most of the stories in the book area off by heart; she often spends time 'reading' the large print books and listening to the stories on the CD player, which she is adept at operating herself. Her enthusiasm for songs and rhymes has also introduced Bella to concepts of number and counting. Bianca has noticed that Bella often 'counts' the children or the steps on the slide, for example. Although not completely accurate, this counting shows that Bella is developing an understanding of one-to-one correspondence and, importantly, also seems to give her a feeling of control over her environment.

When planning to build on Bella's interests, the nursery team decided to expand their selection of books to include some poetry and rhyme books for young children. They also decided to learn more about Vivien Gussin Paley's approach to story-writing and story-acting activities with children. Introducing this approach would give importance to all the children's narratives about their worlds and experiences and give the children who express their creativity through movement and words more opportunities for creative expression.

FURTHER READING

- Brown, B (2001) *Combating Discrimination: Persona Dolls in Action*. Staffs: Trentham Books
- Dickens, M (2014) *A - Z of Inclusion in Early Childhood*. Maidenhead: OUP/McGraw Hill Education
- Meggitt, C, Bruce T and Manning-Morton, J (2016) (6th Edition) *Childcare and Education*. London: Hodder Education.
- Paley, VG (2004) *A Child's Work: the importance of fantasy play*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Pound, L and Harrison, C (2002) *Supporting Musical Development in the Early Years*. Maidenhead: OUP
- Find out more about people who are blind or visually impaired at www.rnib.org.uk
- Dowling, M (4th edition 2014) *Young Children's Personal, Social and Emotional Development*. London: Sage
- Moylett, H (Ed) (2014) *Characteristics Of Effective Early Learning: Helping young children become learners for life*. Maidenhead: Open University Press
- For our three-part series on the Characteristics of Effective Learning, visit: www.nurseryworld.co.uk/how-children-learn

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Children who are engaged in 'playing and exploring', 'creating and thinking' usually:

- know how to operate simple equipment, such as a CD player
- realise tools can be used for a purpose
- enjoy music; playing instruments, singing and dancing
- listen to and join in with more complicated stories and songs asking for their favourite ones again and again
- listen to others one to one or in small groups, when the conversation interests them
- enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities; joining in with repeated refrains and anticipating key events and phrases in rhymes and stories
- can usually think back and forward much more easily than before
- use language creatively: singing familiar songs and delighting in nonsense words and jokes using words that they make up
- use vocabulary focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them and build up vocabulary that reflects their experiences
- use talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences
- begin to use more complex sentences to link thoughts, using, for example, 'and' and 'because'
- use intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make their meaning clear to others

40-54 months: key aspects of cognitive and representational/language development

Usually, at about this age children:

- represent events through movement, using dynamic schemas and through configurative schemas in drawings and models
- show an interest in numerals in the environment and in representing numbers
- realise that anything can be counted; including steps, claps or jumps
- understand ideas such as 'more' and 'fewer'

about how their practice and provision would ensure that she would have full access to the curriculum. This included:

- reviewing the displays and resources to ensure that there were positive images of children with sensory impairments and other disabilities
- reviewing the layout and organisation of the room, with particular emphasis on ensuring that the position of furniture was not changed unnecessarily, that there was good lighting and that resource containers were labelled with samples of the actual object as well as clear pictures and words
- thinking about how adult-led play activities would emphasise use of all the senses
- reflecting on their interactions and making sure that they used talk to describe and comment on what was happening in the group and on what Bella was doing in her play
- introducing objects, displays and resources that would be easier for Bella to see, such as high-contrast and large print and pictures.

INCLUSION

The Unique Child: in practice

Before Bella started in the nursery, the staff team thought



Starting points

Meeting the emotional and learning needs of the unique child



Part nine

Case study: Bella, 48 months

By **Julia Manning-Morton**, an independent consultant, trainer and author (www.key-times.co.uk/profiles/). She specialises in practice and provision that meets the needs of children under three and is an expert on the personal, social and emotional well-being of children and practitioners. Her publications include *Two-Year-Olds In Early Years Settings: Journeys Of Discovery* (2015) and *Exploring Well-being in the Early Years* (2014)

Bella 48 months

Four-year-old Bella lives in a flat in central Manchester with her adoptive parents, Neil and Dawn. All three are of white British heritage and speak English at home.

Bella attends a combined nursery school and children's centre, and although she has only recently started attending the school's nursery class, she is not new to the setting. She has been attending the 'stay and play' and various other groups at the children's centre with Dawn since she was adopted at the age of 12 months. In fact, it was at the centre that Dawn and Neil attended the course for prospective adopters as well as a post-adoption support group.

Being very familiar with the nursery environment and some of the practitioners is very helpful for Bella and her parents, as she has a visual impairment (she is very short-sighted) as a result of having been born prematurely. So, knowing the layout of the building and recognising the voices of some of the adults gives her confidence and the beginnings of a sense of belonging in the centre.

BEING AND BECOMING

Like a lot of four-year-olds, Bella is again showing that 'see-saw' pattern of behaviour that we see in toddlers and two-year-olds. After a period of emotional developmental stability at three years, four-year-olds often experience a period of emotional unsteadiness. However, instead of tantrums or emotional collapses, the struggle for social and emotional confidence at four is more often shown through being boastful, bossy and cheeky.

This certainly describes some of Bella's behaviours; Dawn often says that she is beginning to wonder who is the parent, her or Bella! She also says that Bella has always been strong-willed and takes a while to adapt to new situations.

Theory: temperament

Babies and young children are born with biologically influenced ways of responding to the environment and to other people. These unique character patterns are our temperaments, which continue through childhood and into adulthood.

Temperament is measured by our different levels of emotionality, sociability and reactivity. This includes:

- activity level: the frequency and vigour of movement

- attention persistence levels
- levels of fear or distress when faced by new situations
- levels of 'fussing' or irritability
- the frequency of sociability, happiness and pleasure

This way of measuring children's responses led to the identification of three types of temperament:

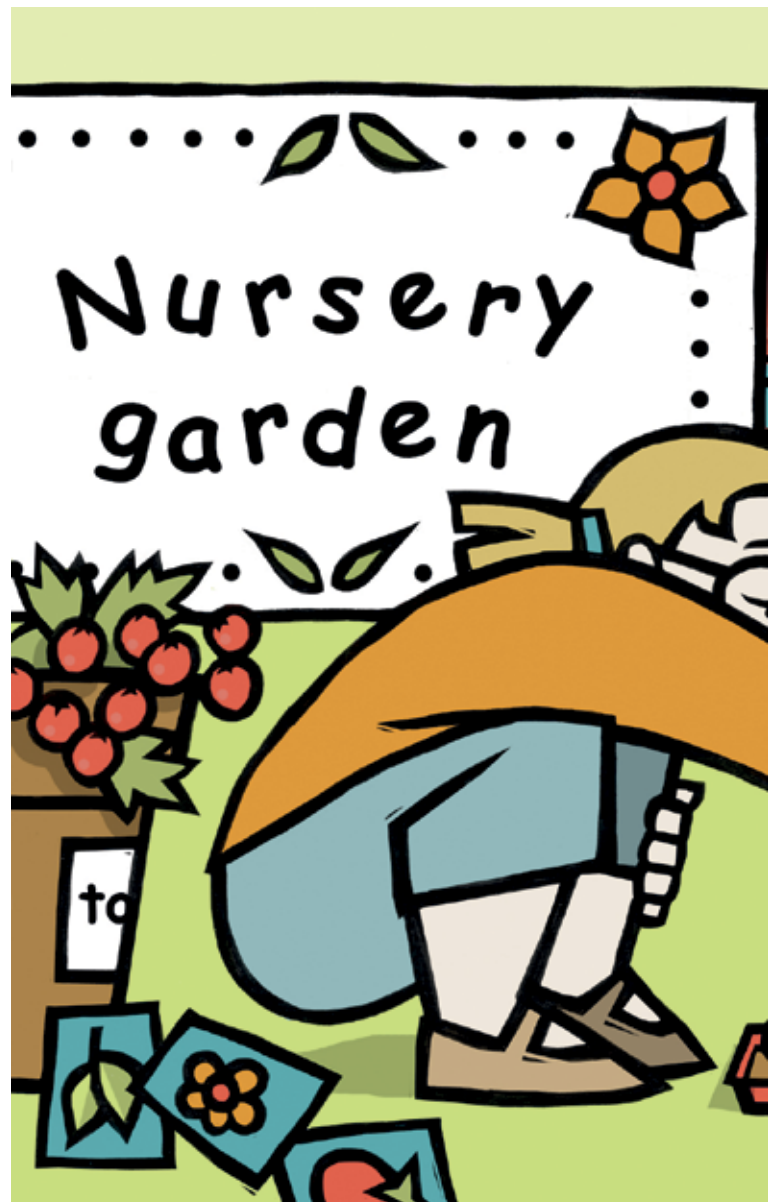
- the 'easy child', who responds positively to new events and has regular physical functions
- the 'difficult child', who is irritable, has irregular patterns and responds negatively to new events
- the 'slow to warm up child', who displays passive resistance and has few intense reactions, positive or negative, but once adapted to a new situation is more positive.

However, as children grow their temperament can change with their development. Our temperamental characteristics and personalities are hugely influenced by our relationships and experiences.

The Unique Child: in practice

For Bella, there are two particular elements that influence this aspect of her development; the disruption of her first attachment relationships with her birth family and her visual impairment.

Both of these have impacted



on Bella's sense of self and feeling of security in a way that make her want to feel in control of what is happening around her.

It has been useful for Bella's key person, Bianca, to understand these elements. This awareness has also helped the team not to form negative, critical opinions of Bella for the more difficult aspects of her temperament, because each kind of temperament has its positive and negative side. For example, Bella's strong will helps her to persevere with tasks and activities that her sight make more difficult.

Bianca learned from Dawn that an effective way of getting around Bella's apparent wilfulness is to talk to her about her anxiety and together identify what would help her to co-operate with the adults and other children in the group.

Another strategy is to make sure that Bella has access to 'Nu-Nu' when she needs him.

Nu-Nu is Bella's soft toy monkey that she has had since she was a baby; he is her security blanket or 'transitional object' that supports her at times of emotional stress. Although he spends most of the day in Bella's own drawer, she can get him out whenever she needs to.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Bianca has observed that when she arrives in the morning, Bella likes to sit on the settee cuddling Nu-Nu and listening intently to what is going on in the room. She resists joining in with the group for 'news time' unless the conversation is interesting to her.

Recently, Ben, another practitioner, told the group that he would be leaving early that



day to go to the opticians to get new glasses. On hearing this, Bella joined the group and told Ben what the optician would do to test his eyes.

She also insisted that the name for this person was an ophthalmologist, so everyone discussed the difference between these two jobs and Bella explained that she went to see an ophthalmologist because she had had 'laser operation, 'cos now I have glasses'.

'Ha-ha,' said Daisy, 'that's funny.' 'No, it's not,' replied Bella. 'You can't say that, you're rude.' With that, she stormed off back to the settee clutching Nu-Nu, looking hurt and upset.

The Unique Child: in practice

As a result of this interchange, the nursery team planned two specific activities. One was to

create an optician's role-play area and the other was to introduce a new Persona Doll with a sensory impairment to their group times, to encourage positive discussion amongst the children and to support Bella.

Following this, they observed Bella taking a lead role in the optician's play area, telling the other children what to do, and they also observed Daisy wearing the play glasses and asking Bella how to clean them.

40-54 months: key aspects of personal, social and emotional development

Usually, at about this age children:

- try to distract themselves when they are upset by engaging, for example, in a new play activity or by using a comfort object
- remember and talk about

Unlike temperament, dispositions are not genetic but learned, mainly through the interactions of people who are important to the child

- significant events in their own experience
- know some of the things that make them unique, and can talk about similarities and differences in relation to friends or family
- are aware of their own feelings, and know that some actions and words can hurt others' feelings
- can usually adapt their behaviour to different events, social situations and changes in routine
- are confident to talk to other children when playing and will communicate freely about own home and community
- show interest in the lives of people who are familiar to them
- show interest in different occupations and ways of life

PLAYING AND EXPLORING

Although Bella's 'bossiness' and strong will may seem to indicate confidence, Bianca came to realise, through sharing her observations with her colleagues, that Bella often displayed an anxious and nervous disposition.

She tended to hold back from situations and then approach them cautiously. This is particularly the case with more boisterous physical activities, and Bianca noticed that Bella didn't use the garden and outside play areas freely and independently.

Neil said that Bella had never liked going to the park playground when it was busy. Her sight impairment meant that she couldn't react quickly enough to the fast movements of the other children, so she felt overwhelmed by all the activity. He said they had then usually just gone there to play at very quiet times.

THEORY: DISPOSITIONS

A disposition is a pattern of behaviour or a habit of mind, a tendency to respond to situations in certain ways. Although similar to temperament, in as much as they are part of our personalities, dispositions are different because they are not genetic; they are learned, mainly through

the interactions and responses of people who are important to the child but also through the kinds of play situations the child experiences.

Developing positive dispositions to learning such as curiosity and perseverance are very important. However, they can be strengthened or weakened according to the responses of the adults and the nature of the environment.

It is crucial, therefore, that practitioners pay attention to how their interactions and responses to children and the environments and play opportunities that they create all support the development of positive dispositions in children.

The Unique Child: in practice

Bianca thought about what Neil had said and considered how she could enable Bella to feel more confident outside.

Firstly, she organised her key group time outside on some days and focused initially on bike riding. She planned bike circuits so that the riding was more controlled and the small group had a choice of different trucks, three and two wheeled bikes for a range of difficulty.

Secondly, Bianca involved Bella in the growing garden, a quiet, sheltered area, where she enjoyed the smells and tastes of the flowers and vegetables that the children and staff were growing. Her interest and enjoyment meant Bella rapidly gained skills in handling the tools, learning the names of the plants and understanding what was needed to grow plants successfully.

CREATING AND THINKING

An aspect of play and learning where Bella is already confident is in relation to music, stories and rhymes. 'Dan the music man' visits the nursery once per week and Bella does not hesitate to join the group. Her well-developed hearing and listening skills enable her to differentiate sounds, rhythm, tone and volume