Reflective practice – the process of analysing your work with children in order to improve it – is a key aspect of early years pedagogy. It aims to have a positive impact on children, by ensuring their individual needs are met, as well as on parents, who are reassured that the quality of the provision is high. Staff also benefit by becoming more confident in their abilities, which in turn boosts motivation and job satisfaction.

One of the downsides of reflective practice is the tendency to focus on what hasn’t gone well. While it is clearly important to work on areas that need developing, it is equally valuable to consider an individual’s or setting’s strengths. This is where video can be incredibly helpful, and in particular video enhanced reflective practice (VERP).

A model that has been around for more than 20 years (Kennedy et al 2015), VERP involves a practitioner reviewing very short video clips of him or her interacting with a child, group of children or another adult. This helps both individuals and groups to develop their skills using the principles of video interactive guidance (VIG), an approach used to foster communication that is sensitive, responsive and mutually receptive. This is also known as attuned interaction, and is most commonly employed in video enhanced therapy to help parents communicate better with children.

A video project run at George Perkins Nursery in Birmingham stemmed from the desire to understand why the quiet, hard-to-engage children attending didn’t seem to have a voice. Manager Sarah Presswood says, ‘We have five Early Years Pupil Premium children, who were on the periphery of activities. We wanted not just to be supporting these children but upskilling staff as well.’

In one extreme case, says Ms Presswood, ‘A girl had came in desperate for breakfast, but was selectively mute and wouldn’t even gesture to establish whether she wanted toast or cornflakes.’
interacting with the children, and during the first training session, how was this achieved?

How was this achieved?

During the first training session, staff were videoed positively interacting with the children, and then the clips watched by the whole team with the following questions in mind:

- When are my attachments secure?
- What does good attunement look and feel like, for both child and me as practitioner?

Staff were encouraged to reflect on what they had seen. Because the interactions with the children were positive, many strengths were identified, and a team of six practitioners, including managers, volunteered to be videoed, analyse the footage themselves, and then edit it down to a few moments in order to share specific positive interactions with the group.

The first involved defining reflective, confident and responsive staff or children. This was done in groups in order to facilitate debate and negotiation.

The second exercise required individuals to reflect on their own practice and rate themselves on their reflectiveness, confidence and responsiveness, with consideration of the evidence they had to support their self-assessment and next steps to try to improve their score.

The final activity was the same as above but related to children, with senior and junior members of staff paired up and asked to consider the three defining qualities of each key child. Again, there was an expectation for reasons to be given for the ratings, and rough action plans to boost scores as needed.

The key learning point is that reflection must be intrinsic to everyone’s daily practice, says manager Sarah Presswood.

‘However, I realised that it has to go hand-in-hand with being confident and responsive – for children and management as well as staff – so my assistant manager and I ran a training day for the staff to come up with our own agreed principles of what reflective confident staff and children look like. We ran three activities:

- The first involved defining the three qualities that

FURTHER INFORMATION