

# CASE STUDY



## Old School House Day Nursery

***“Other awards can be a bit tokenistic; they are just a one-off stamp of approval which can be a waste of resources. With Investors in People you keep reaping the rewards as time goes by.”***

**Linda Baston-Pitt, Head of Organisation**

**BACKGROUND:** Health and Wellbeing Award

**Size:** 28 Employees

**Sector:** Nursery

**Location:** East of England

### THE ORGANISATION

When Linda Baston-Pitt struggled to find a suitable place for her own children to go to nursery, she decided to set up her own. This began the history of Newmarket's Old School House Day Nursery. Set up in 1994 it has been recognised as an Investor in people since 2000. It now has 28 employees and 250 children on its books.

### THE CHALLENGES

Old School House Day Nurseries' philosophy is to provide the best possible standards for the children who learn there, the employees work there and the parents who place their trust in the nursery. Integral to this philosophy is nursery founder Linda Baston-Pitt's own overriding passion to ensure a holistic approach to health and wellbeing, not only for the children but also for the parents and staff team.

### THE STRATEGY

While health and wellbeing was clearly important for the nursery it wasn't until it began to work towards the Health and Wellbeing Award, that *employee* health and wellbeing received such a strategic focus. It complemented the work the nursery had done with the wider Investors in

People framework, as well as the work it had done with the government initiative, 'Health Promoting Nurseries'. However, it went beyond both by allowing them to work with health and wellbeing in a much more focused way.

By taking a co-ordinated approach, the entire nursery became a health-promoting environment.

### LINDA BASTON-PITT COMMENTS

“In the education sector we are delivering health and wellbeing life skills. We felt strongly from the outset that in order to help children to be healthy we had to support the people who worked directly with them. If the staff aren't practicing what they are preaching this simply won't work.

The Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award became the catalyst in creating a structured approach to embedding health and wellbeing factors into the nursery. Since then, we haven't looked back. It has helped us to integrate a truly holistic approach to health and wellbeing in all aspects of our nursery life”.

### THE RESULTS

The award acted as a tool to monitor and improve the nursery's approach to keeping employees healthy and well.

The award also resulted in the introduction of a number of new initiatives which were now grounded in the new strategic approach. These included:

- Formal mentoring for new staff and staff undertaking new roles
- Awareness raising sessions so staff are clear about what Health and Wellbeing means for Old School House Day Nursery

- A staff cafe with free fruit and healthy drinks
- Pedometers for all staff and competition with prizes for individuals and teams who have achieved the most steps

As a result of working with the Award, health and wellbeing has taken a life of its own. Rather than being something imposed on staff from 'on high' it is run by employees for employees. Staff decide what health and wellbeing activities they want to stop, start or introduce. An employee driven and owned health and wellbeing programme has been a huge cultural shift for the nursery. It means that things keep evolving as employees work together to come up with ideas that are naturally relevant and valued by them. One such idea was the introduction of a health and wellbeing co-ordinator role responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of existing activities and gathering employee feedback and suggestions.

A more strategic approach to health and wellbeing has helped the nursery to:

**Recruit the right people. By publicising the nurseries health promoting environment the nursery feels it has been able to attracting a higher calibre of employee and that appointed staff are staying for longer.**

**Reduce staff absenteeism from 4.9% in 2007 to below 4%. This is a particularly pleasing result for the nursery as the national average is 5.3% while the average for the caring profession is 7.7%.**

**Improve fitness and health on an individual level. This year, every nursery staff member has signed up for the 5K race for life. Some are now booked on the 10K race. This has happened because fitness levels have improved so much.**

#### **LINDA BASTON-PITT COMMENTS**

“Rather than achieving something that is just about the here and now, the Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award allows for continuous improvement. It is all about looking ahead and keeping things fresh.

Health and wellbeing is fundamental to an effective and productive workplace. Ill health and sickness are at an all time high. If you don't tackle this issue head on through an effective health and wellbeing programme you will just be fighting fire the whole time. This award allows you to make smarter decisions about health and wellbeing. You simply can't afford not to do it”.