

# Developing an Inclusive Early Years Environment

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Millie Barnes

Senior Manager – Children and Families

YMCA Cheltenham



# The story of Cherry Blossom Pre School

- Located in the heart of West Cheltenham operating from the church halls
- Began as a small, volunteer led playgroup through the church
- Then became Family Space Playgroup
- By September 2022...
  - merged with YMCA Cheltenham
  - Staff team of 5
  - 24 children on roll
  - Open 4 mornings per week, term-time only



January 2023

# Further developments

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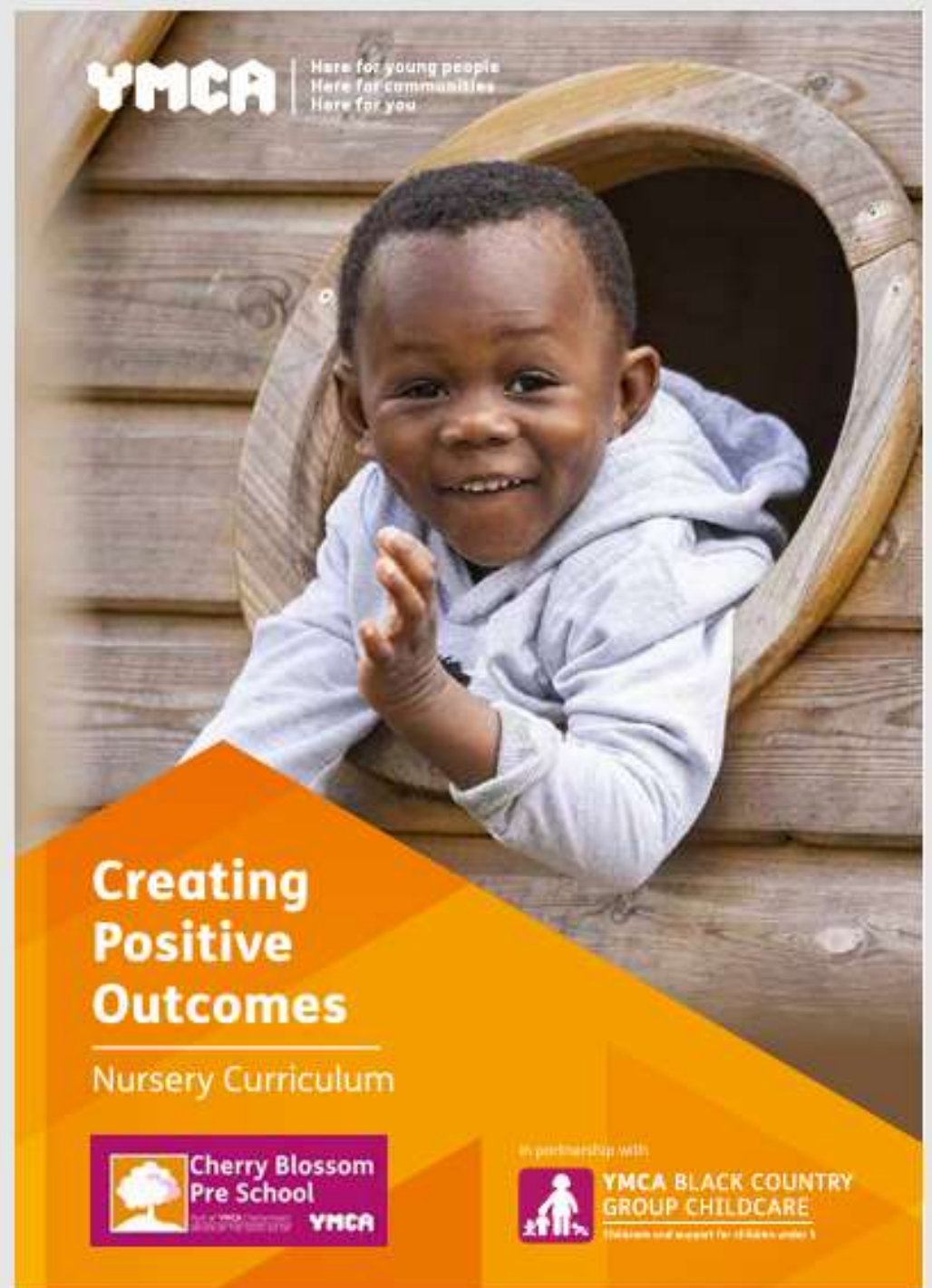
- Extended opening hours
- Separated classrooms (2-3's and 3-4's)
- Increased staff team
- Developed classrooms to become more neutral – open ended, natural resources, quiet & calm spaces to promote curiosity and imagination
- June 2024 we rebranded as Cherry Blossom Pre School
- January 2025 we launched our baby room



# Pre School Curriculum

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- Visited YMCA Black Country who kindly shared their nursery curriculum with us
  - Curriculum provides a clear focus with positive outcomes for all
  - Recipe book for early years teaching
  - Skilled practitioners enhance and adapt curriculum to maintain a child-led approach (key considerations SEN, children's interests, individual development)
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# Working with our Local Authority

- Established key connections with the Early Years team
- Invited to join the Delivering Better Value Pilot Scheme with Gloucestershire County Council
  - 12 months
  - Developing the setting to become fully inclusive
  - Staff training and practice, enhancing environment, SEN provision



# Early Years Inclusion Champions

- June 2024 successfully completed the DBV scheme and awarded Early Years Inclusion Champions
- Staff are more confident
- Classrooms are calm and inviting
- Varying spaces to suit every child
- Sensory input has been a key consideration to our environment





# What does it mean to be an inclusive setting?

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- How are we interacting with our children?
- How are we inviting children to engage?
- What are we looking for in our observations?
- How are we adapting our provision to meet every child's needs?
- Are our staff knowledgeable and confident?
- Are we truly child-led?



- Actively listening
- Giving children space and time to communicate
- Avoid question overload
- Consider the size/space/sound/colours within the classroom
- Using observations to inform our understanding of children
- Understanding play ques
- Invitations to play



# Case study

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Ben joined the setting at 2 years old,  
parents were Polish and Polish was  
mostly spoken at home

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Ben was non-verbal

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Ben loved water play – especially in  
the sink!

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Transitions were difficult for him

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Parents did not have any concerns

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# How did we support Ben?

- Ensured water play opportunities were readily available each day
- Created cosy, calm, and quiet spaces for Ben to access freely
- Modelled single words to Ben in his play
- Observed for play cues – eye contact, hand holding, quiet pauses
- Played alongside Ben rather than directly opposite
- Beach ball breakthrough!
- Parent partnership was essential – gentle encouragements with open and honest conversations (referrals, EHCP, SaLT)
- By the time Ben left our setting to go to school he was initiating play, allowing peers to join his play, singing songs, seeking adults for support.





# Moving forward

- A fully inclusive environment is ever evolving
- Flexibility and understanding is essential
- Considerations to environmental input every day
- Utilise support available to settings – LA have lots to offer
- Staff training
- Continuous evaluation of provision with staff teams
- Establishing positive working relationships with families

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Questions?

