



CASE STUDY REPORT

The Birth to Five Service website: Supporting practice and provision in the Early Years

Sarah Howe

This study was originally published in 2010 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of a website created to support and promote effective Early Years Foundation Stage provision and practice in Lincolnshire.

Aims: The main aim of the development work was to create a website to support and promote effective Early Years Foundation Stage provision and practice across Lincolnshire.

Methods: The participants in the development of the website included Children's services staff, Early years leader, External agency, Local authority staff, Website Manager, IT/Website Officer, and Website Team Members. The methods used included research into copyright and data protection, expertise in website creation and marketing, whole team training, usage data, questionnaires, and feedback from practitioners.

Findings: The Birth to Five Service Team created a website to support and promote effective Early Years Foundation Stage provision and practice. It has had a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, school organisation and leadership. Usage data and feedback from Practitioners, Consultants and Leadership Teams indicate its success.

Implications: The findings suggest that investing in time and expertise, creating quality resources, and having a pro-active website team can lead to improved pupil learning, teaching, and school organization and leadership.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Children's centre or nursery education; Independent education; LA maintained school education; Private education; Voluntary education; Early Years Foundation Stage; Communication, language and literacy; Creative development; Knowledge and understanding of the world; Personal, social and emotional development; Physical development; Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

The Birth to Five Service Team identified the need to support and promote effective Early Years Foundation Stage provision and practice through a website which could be accessed by practitioners within Lincolnshire.

- celebrate and promote effective practice
- aid communication across the county
- house information and resources, and aid distribution
- make direct links to National Strategies EYFS documentation
- make direct links to useful sites, information and publications
- provide forums for some cohorts of Practitioners
- support training by the Birth to Five Service
- be simple and easy to use and update by members of the website team.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Early years foundation stage practitioner
- LA adviser

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- Early Years Foundation Stage
- Communication, language and literacy
- Creative development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Physical development
- Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

The website has been created to promote effective practice across Lincolnshire. We intended to impact on pupil learning through providing guidance, support, challenge and professional development which the users can access.

Lincolnshire has over 1500 settings for Early Years:

258 Primary Schools
5 Maintained Nurseries
315 Private, Voluntary and Independent Settings (PVI)
21 Special Schools
14 Independent Schools
37 Children Centres
852 Childminder Settings

What were your success criteria?

During the planning stages of the website, the three main intentions were:

- to ensure that all Lincolnshire EYFS Practitioners were aware of the website and accessed this on a regular basis
- to use the website to improve communication systems between the BFS Service and all Settings in Lincolnshire
- to share the key principles and messages within the EYFS

In order to achieve this, the Service needed to:

- effectively market and promote the website
- regularly monitor usage and statistics
- ensure that the website is up-to-date and includes useful documents and links
- make use of website pages and sections as part of the BFS training programmes.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Periodic teacher assessment

Describe the CPD approaches you used

The timescale to structure and launch this website was nine months (Jan 08-Sept 08). There were many stages needed to achieve this, some included:

Further detail is given in 'Development of the website' below.

What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

The Website Manager had expertise in structuring the content of websites and the associated marketing from previous roles in schools. The IT/Website officer drew upon his own expertise in website creation and his knowledge of HTML to enhance some pages within the system.

Research was done into copyright to establish 'Terms of Use' and into Data Protection to ensure any photographs or documents used were done so safely and in accordance with appropriate permissions.

Who provided you with support?

- Children's services staff
- Early years leader
- External agency
- Local authority staff

How were you supported?

The BFS Website Group is very pro-active and each member is allocated tasks which often linked to his/her areas of expertise and role within the Service.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

LA EYFS Profile data shows an improvement in learning, though the Birth to Five website is just one factor in this.

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Data comparison of cohorts

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

The Lincolnshire EYFS Profile results have increased in the academic year 2009-2010. There are many factors which enabled this although some is due to Practitioners using the BFS website to access up-to-date information and relevant documents, especially within the 'EYFSP and Moderation' section on the site.

The BFS Questionnaire and feedback to members of the service indicates that the website has impacted on Practitioner skills and knowledge and this has influenced pupil learning. 'The Gallery of Effective Practice' section includes examples of indoor and outdoor provision and the images and information which support this.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Direct feedback from Practitioners, Consultants and Leadership Teams has indicated that this success criteria has been achieved, alongside the positive responses on the BFS Website Questionnaire which was distributed in October 2009 and usage statistics.

Between September 2008 and April 2010, the statistics have increased and feedback has been positive. Over 67,000 unique viewers have visited the site, the average time on the site being over 4 minutes. The most popular areas of the site include:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage Support and Guidance Materials
- The Gallery of Effective Practice
- The Workforce Development Section
- The Inclusion Section

The most popular cities from which people are viewing our site are Lincoln, London, Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham and Sheffield. We are also pleased to learn that the content of our site is being viewed and used by Practitioners abroad. The three most popular countries are the United States of America, Germany and Ireland.

In May 2010, the Website Team distributed a questionnaire (see example) to all Schools and Settings within the county in order to ascertain the effectiveness of the website and plan for further development. We received over 300 responses. It is expected that a similar BFS Website Questionnaire will occur every three- four years. Please refer to the quotations included in this Case Study.

National Strategies asked the BFS Service to produce a 'Good Practice Exemplar' for this website.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

Some quotations given during the BFS Website Questionnaire distribution included:

I think it's an excellent site which has helped me enormously with setting up our new foundation unit. It's very useful to see the news bulletins to update myself quickly - it's the site that I found most useful. (EYFS Leader in a Lincolnshire Maintained School)

Information at your fingertips. More and more settings are appreciating the benefits and up-to-date information and reminders. What a brilliant tool and resource. (Member of the BFS Team)

Well done. It's a great site and makes Birth to Five available 24/7! (Manager of a Lincolnshire Nursery)

A very useful site - I always give the address and recommend to people when I'm delivering EYPS training. (EYPS - Partner in a Lincolnshire Early Years Centre)

I have the website set as my homepage so I can see daily any important changes, reports etc... (Manager of a Lincolnshire Children's Centre)

A great website which is always there to refer to for information. Photo Gallery is great to get ideas from. I always view the site every week to look for new information. (Lincolnshire EYFS Practitioner)

Think it's a really excellent website and a must for all Early Years Practitioners. (Deputy Head, Lincolnshire Primary School)

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Usage data

Outcomes of questionnaire

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

The BFS website supports management and administration of EYFS.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

The content of the Birth to Five Service Website have supported many aspects of leadership and management in Schools and Settings. The feedback in several website questionnaires confirmed this. Content on the site includes:

- Up-to- date information on several new initiatives and support documents
- A 'News and Correspondence' Section which comprises Manager's updates, generic letters and updates, plus BFS Newsletters to keep leaders up -to -date on Early Years news and issues
- Sections within the site which support the Observation, Assessment and Planning cycle together with some monitoring grids. There is also a section related to EYFSP and moderation, and ARK (Assessment and Record-Keeping)
- A Workforce Development Section (Training) which comprises on-line PVI booking facilities and details of courses available throughout Lincolnshire to support CPD needs
- Effective Early Years practice information and guidance, including a 'Gallery of Effective Practice'
- Direct links to the Ofsted site and a forthcoming section on 'EYFS Leadership and Management'(December 2010)

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Investment in time and expertise.

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

Key resources include:

- Suitable server facilities to host a website and access to website coding expertise and graphic design abilities.
- A considerable amount of Early Years expertise, resources and materials
- Quality time to reflect and plan next steps as a team
- Key members of staff, for example, a Website Manager and IT/Website Officer, plus Website Team Members, who have dedicated time and adequate skills to manage and maintain a full and effective website.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Whole team training on the website.

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

STARTING POINTS INCLUDE: Before creating the educational website, establish whether there is enough time and expertise to design and maintain such a large project on a long-term basis. Do not underestimate the time required. As a group, determine who the website is for, the content needed to make it effective and how this will be marketed to the intended audience.

Due to the vast scale of such a project, ensure that as many people as possible are responsible for the building and maintenance of the pages and sections within this. A Website Group could steer this development although all in the Service may have appropriate responsibility.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS COULD INCLUDE:

- An effective but easy to navigate website design and layout
- Quality, carefully planned resources, links and documents which will help to increase Practitioner EYFS practice and provision across Lincolnshire.
- A pro-active Website Team which meets on a regular basis to review the site and use statistics and Practitioner feedback to inform future planning.
- Appropriate time for members of the BFS to build, maintain and expand the site. Particularly consider this for those who approve pages and put these onto the site. Time also needs to be given in Whole Team Training Days so that all are informed and involved in any website development and review periods – shared ownership within the Service.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

The BFS Website three- year Development Plan is comprehensive and ambitious.

This includes plans for:

- Forums to facilitate communication between Practitioners in this very large county
- On-line bookings for PVI training
- A springboard to the E-Learning courses created by the BFS service
- A Leadership and Management Section
- Virtual tours to share effective practice and provision across Lincolnshire (distant future!)

Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- Development of the Birth to Five website
- BFS website promotional postcard
- BFS website promotion in newsletter
- BFS website - example of promotional leaflet
- BFS Lincs LA website questionnaire
- BFS website usage statistics

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This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

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