

Attainment Challenge Fund: Family Learning and Early Intervention

Little Acorns and TLQ June 29th 2017*

*Little Acorns initially ran for 16 weeks from January 24th until June 27th 2017 afforded by the Attainment Challenge Fund 2016-17. Funding from Annandale and Nithsdale Community Benefit Company (ANCB) allowed the group to continue until January 2019. Funding is being sought to continue beyond this date.

Little Acorns Summary

Little Acorns is a playgroup for parents and their pre-school aged children and babies. It has been very well-received and attended, reaching families from Beattock village, its outlying areas, Moffat town and further afield. Its aim is to support families by modelling parenting and play; interacting with parents and their children and recognising and supporting good parenting.

Sessions are on Tuesday afternoons in Beattock Nursery's two rooms and outdoor area. As well as offering free play, every session focuses on sensory play, art and craft and snack, with a story and song time ending the afternoon.

The group has also offered parents 10 weeks of free Baby Massage with a practitioner from Early Years Scotland.

Each month families are given a gift to extend and enhance play opportunities at home. Gifts have included a daffodil bulb to plant, play dough ingredients bag, bubbles and story book.

The group is led and run by Early Years practitioners and overseen by a Nursery teacher.

There are 49 children registered with Little Acorns, 23 of whom are from the Beattock catchment area, 19 are from Moffat and 7 have travelled to the group from out-with the Moffat/Beattock cluster: from Glasgow, Dumfries and Parkgate.

Total number children registered	49
Total from Beattock Village	19
Total from Beattock's catchment area	4
Total from Moffat town	19
Total from areas out-with Moffat Cluster	7

On average 15 toddlers and babies and 13 adults attend each week. The peak was in May 2017 when 28 children and 23 parents attended on one day.

Impact of Little Acorns:

- Enhanced transition from home to nursery: staff and parents and children building up good relationships; staff getting to know children before they start nursery.
- Positive benefits highlighted by parents - see comments below.

Future Recommendations:

- Continuation of Little Acorns and the positive links with families within the community

Parents attending in June were asked to complete an evaluation form. Ten returns were received.

Responses to Parent Feedback Form

The majority of parents surveyed felt very confident or confident about their own parenting and took time most days to read and share stories, to sing songs or rhymes together, to make marks and play with letters and numbers.

1. Do you feel confident to help with your child's learning and development?

	<i>0-not confident</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5-very confident</i>
Before Little Acorns	0	0	0	0	3	7
After Little Acorns	0	0	0	0	3	7

Comments: *'I feel fairly confident but I feel this play session is good for my child to learn and play with other children.'*

2. How often do you do any of the following activities with your baby or child?

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Read or share stories</i>	<i>Sing songs or rhymes together</i>	<i>Make marks (drawing, painting, play dough)</i>	<i>Play with letters and numbers</i>
Done once a week or most days <i>before</i> attending Little Acorns	8	9	9	9
Increased the amount of time spent on activity <i>after</i> attending Little Acorns	2	1	1	1

Comments: *'I didn't realise how much she liked to paint and get messy, painting isn't a thing we do at home.'*

3. Has Little Acorns made a difference to you or your child or your relationship in any way?

'I definitely make more of an effort to play more exciting things at home like play dough.'

'Yes, it makes me more confident that he will start nursery without him getting upset.'

'It has benefitted us all as an opportunity to meet other toddlers, mums and dads in the community. That gives us a focal point for discussions at home...who did you play with? Who was there? etc, etc.'

'No, however, if I wasn't a childminder I may not have resources to hand as a parent.'

'She is very happy and relaxed at Little Acorns.'

'Allowed me to spend time with my child in a different environment from home. He has opportunities to play/interact with other children and experience things such as group singing, painting, etc.'

'From a parent's perspective, a chance to interact with your child and observe how they tackle different tasks and their interaction with the group.'

'Yes, he has become more confident when showing and telling me what he's up to.'

4. What do you like about Little Acorns?

'Being involved with everything he does and mixing with other children and mums.'

'Although a relaxed and happy atmosphere, it is very well organised and constructed. My grand-daughter cannot wait for her next visit and leaves Little Acorns very happy.'

'Talking to other parents, the social aspect, opportunities provided for the children, Baby Massage, outdoor play, the lovely staff.'

'Offers lots of activities in a very relaxed place. Staff are very helpful and friendly.'

'Little Acorns is fantastic! You can tell the ladies involved in running the sessions are very passionate about it and this positive attitude is contagious. Well done ladies!'

'The variety of things for the kids to do. Security of the school allows you to turn your back for a second, enjoy a cuppa and catch-up. The sessions are very stimulating for the kids.'

'Children are in a safe, comfortable environment and enjoy playing inside and outside with other children.'

'It's nice for both my sons to play together in the nursery setting, also having a chat and cuppa with other parents and teachers.'

'My child gets used to nursery before he starts and gets us out of house.'

'I like that there is a good variety of things to do as my child gets bored easily.'

5. Is there anything you would change about Little Acorns?

'Have it twice a week instead! There aren't enough groups in this area for kids of my child's age.'

'No, I and the kids love it! So thanks!'

'Maybe the day it's on. We attend Moffat Nursery on a Tuesday morning.'

'I think it's great. I'd be happy to bring guitar and play along with the kids' songs. It would give the kids the chance to touch, play and hear a real guitar and perhaps we could distribute percussion to them for everyone to join in?'

'Not that I can think of - the sessions are great, giving freedom indoors and out to explore the nursery environment.'

'No, very happy with this fantastic group.'

'It's brilliant to have this group set up and has certainly been a fantastic addition to the limited groups which are available in the area. Thank-you.'

'Nothing at the moment.'

'No, have it twice a week??'