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## We are all learners here: Our Lady Star of the Sea Nursery

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### Brief description

At Our Lady Star of the Sea Nursery, a strong commitment to continuous professional development gives staff the knowledge and skills to model effective learning for children and promote a love of exploration and discovery. This example is one of a set of 10 that have been published to support the survey report: [Getting it right first time](#).

### Overview – the nursery's message



'Since the nursery was established in 1997 we have worked tirelessly to ensure that the nursery is an exciting place to be, one in which children and staff can learn together. Our journey, albeit challenging, has created a "learning community", based on openness and trust, with a clear vision of excellence. Children feel comfortable to be themselves, as they explore the world in many new and innovative ways.'

*Barbara Draper – nursery manager*

### The good practice in detail

The manager's passion for learning is infectious, and she has created a 'learning community' which enables children to make excellent progress in their learning and development. Staff continually access targeted training and professional development to improve their interactions with children. The manager is dedicated to providing children with the best possible learning experiences because the children 'only go through our hands once'.

Continuous learning and development for staff is embedded in practice. Staff support children's learning successfully because they have high expectations of what children can

achieve and secure knowledge of how children learn best. Necessary learning, for example, about the revised Early Years Foundation Stage framework is prioritised, but not at the expense of providing training opportunities to meet individual and whole-staff needs. This builds a strong team as well as effective individuals.

Nursery staff join school training days, access local authority training opportunities and have in-house training designed by the manager. Topics as diverse as children's brain development and the educational approaches of [Reggio Emilia](#) and [Te Whariki](#) are just some of the topics the staff have explored together. The manager posts interesting reading matter and video clips on the nursery intranet site for staff to access. Staff are very open to applying their new learning, for example, utilising the Ferre Laevers' [scales of wellbeing and involvement](#) to monitor children's engagement with the nursery environment and effectively identify gaps in the provision.

Training is underpinned by opportunities to share good practice with school staff, for example by observing one another's teaching. The manager also uses video clips of good and poor practice to stimulate debate about how best to meet children's needs. Weekly staff meetings are an unrestricted forum to discuss what works and what needs to improve, and to share successful topics arising from children's interests.

Staff model the characteristics of effective learning. They always keep in mind what they want the children to learn, while valuing children's choices and opinions. They regularly ask the children, 'What are we going to learn about today?' and encourage them to see adults as partners in learning rather than just providers of information. Staff demonstrate an eagerness to investigate and a questioning attitude, which helps children to be confident to ask questions. During a topic on freezing, the children were extremely well supported to find and suggest items to put in the freezer, and to examine what happens, for example, when bananas freeze. Children are given the time they need to repeat their experiments until they have consolidated their learning. Resources and activities invite children to explore, and become engrossed in their investigations, and staff encourage children to concentrate, persevere, investigate and think critically. This helps children to think of themselves as successful learners, which develops confidence and builds self-esteem.

Staff devise individual learning plans for every child, based on observation and assessments which are recorded in the 'learning journeys'; their progress is tracked and monitored carefully and discussed in team meetings. Data on children's achievement on entry to school is analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision, and staff regularly question their routines to gauge their continuing usefulness.

## Nursery background

[Our Lady Star of the Sea Nursery](#) is a private day nursery accommodated in the school building of Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School in St Annes-On-Sea, Lancashire. The nursery has 20 places for children aged from two-years-old to attend on a full- or part-time basis.

## Other examples published in this set

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[Boldon Nursery School](#)

Childminder 510228  
Garstang Pre-School Nursery  
Highters Heath Nursery School  
Southwater Village Hall Pre-School  
Newstead Children's Centre  
Witton Gilbert Nursery  
Wheatley Hill Community Nursery

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#). To view other good practice examples, go to: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice)