

SEEDA Sustainable Business Awards aim to encourage and promote a sustainable approach to business in the South East region through celebrating excellence, significant achievement and through the dissemination of best practice.

ABC FAMILY NURSERY

COMPANY BACKGROUND

The ABC Family Nursery was started in 1998. It moved to its current premises, which it converted from a redundant Church Hall, in November 2001. The Nursery provides for up to 40 children each day, from birth to five years, attracting clients from a 30-mile radius. It employs 14 staff, all of whom are fully engaged in the company's efforts to deliver a sustainable, high quality service. ABC Family Nursery aims to be the first nursery in Hastings to achieve the Pre-School Learning Alliance Quality Accreditation. From the outset, ABC Nursery has sought to minimise its environmental impacts and, overall, to run a sustainable operation; this has already produced economic benefits and continues to provide the motivation for further planned improvements.



SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Energy Efficiency

A second floor was added as part of the building conversion; this was fully insulated. New, additional, windows were double-glazed, and replacement of original windows with double-glazed units is planned. There are also plans to insulate the building's large ceiling in due course.

Roof-mounted solar panels for water heating were installed in September 2002; once the system is well-established, its benefits will be promoted to parents. Low-energy lighting is used throughout the Nursery; staff are encouraged to switch off lights when not needed.

The installation of a controlled water boiler, used for hot drinks, has reduced electricity consumption – consuming at least 50% less electricity than a kettle in equivalent use.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ Bringing a redundant Victorian building into use to provide a high quality Nursery facility with a good ambience and plenty of space for children's activities.
- ❖ A clear Environmental Policy, developed in co-operation with parents.
- ❖ Regular surveys of clients (parents) on management issues – including environment-related issues – eg. the decision to use washable nappies.
- ❖ Full engagement of staff in development and implementation of sustainability policy, including discussion slot at regular monthly meetings.

Waste Minimisation

The Nursery makes considerable efforts to reduce the quantities of waste generated. Currently, it produces one to two sacks of clinical waste per week, plus general waste which is stored in a 660-litre bin, emptied once each week.

'Cotton-Bottoms' washable nappies are used for the younger children attending the nursery. The used pads are collected and washed off-site, using an environmentally acceptable detergent, and the waterproof wraps are washed on-site. This system reduces the quantity of waste sent to landfill and is 50% cheaper than the equivalent cost of premium disposable nappies, saving over £2200 in a full year.

Paper towels are not used; instead, flannels are folded into paper towel dispensers, and washed after each use. This method reduces waste and saves money.

The Nursery foyer houses a collection bin to receive parents' donations of household items for re-use in creative play, including role-playing activities. Several parents have taken collection bins to their workplaces. The Nursery also accepts donations of second-hand toys. Aluminium cans are collected for recycling, and the proceeds generated are donated to the Blind Association. Much of the Nursery furniture is secondhand, donated free of charge. Packaging from deliveries is also used in creative activities.

Cushions and floor coverings for 'Reading Corners' are made from old duvets, pillows and fabric offcuts.

Milk is delivered in reusable bottles. Around half a carrier bag of waste food is produced each day; this is now composted on site.

Paper recycling in conjunction with a specialist company is currently under trial.

Water Efficiency

In the Nursery's 'Sleep Room', children are allocated their own labelled bedding on a weekly basis, and are not allowed to share – in this way bedding needs only to be washed each week, rather than daily. All 13 toilets in the Nursery have been fitted with water displacement devices.

Purchasing

Wherever possible, ABC favours local companies for purchasing goods and services, for example:

- *Children's furniture.*
- *Fruit and vegetables – for daily consumption.*
- *Other food – as unprocessed and additive-free as possible.*
- *'Cotton Bottoms' the washable nappy supplier, is based in West Sussex.*
- *Staff uniforms.*



Transport

ABC Nursery has a small car park. Staff (and clients where possible) are encouraged to walk, use buses, or car-share to get to work. Of the Nursery's 14 staff, only two travel to work in their own cars – others have commented on the de-stressing benefits of not driving to and from work.

Corporate Social Responsibility

ABC has a link with the Government's 'Sure Start' scheme, which helps parents with children aged 0 to 4 years gain access to local services, including good play facilities and childcare. The Nursery offers places (funded by 'Sure Start') for children of less well-off parents on a short-term basis. Any monies raised at ABC's Summer Fair and Open Days are donated to the children's ward of the Conquest Hospital in St Leonards.

CONTACT

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