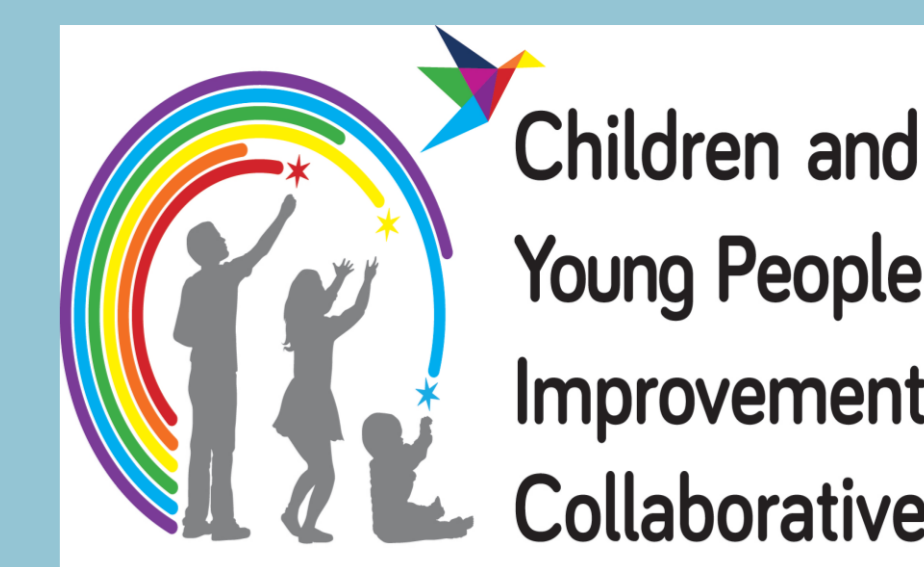


Less questions, more comments!

Improving Listening & Talking at Balcurvie Nursery

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Kathleen Ward, Speech & Language Therapist



Rationale

At Balcurvie Nursery from our e-LIPS (Early Language in Play Settings) assessments, a number of children were identified as having a low age equivalent score in terms of their communication & language development. Realising the Ambition, the National practice guidance for early years in Scotland, highlights how communication and language is considered to be one of the most important aspects of child development. It not only underpins learning but is also essential for survival and enables children to flourish. Working alongside a Speech & Language Therapist, the team at Balcurvie have been exploring how rich adult-child led interactions can support and challenge children's communication and language development.

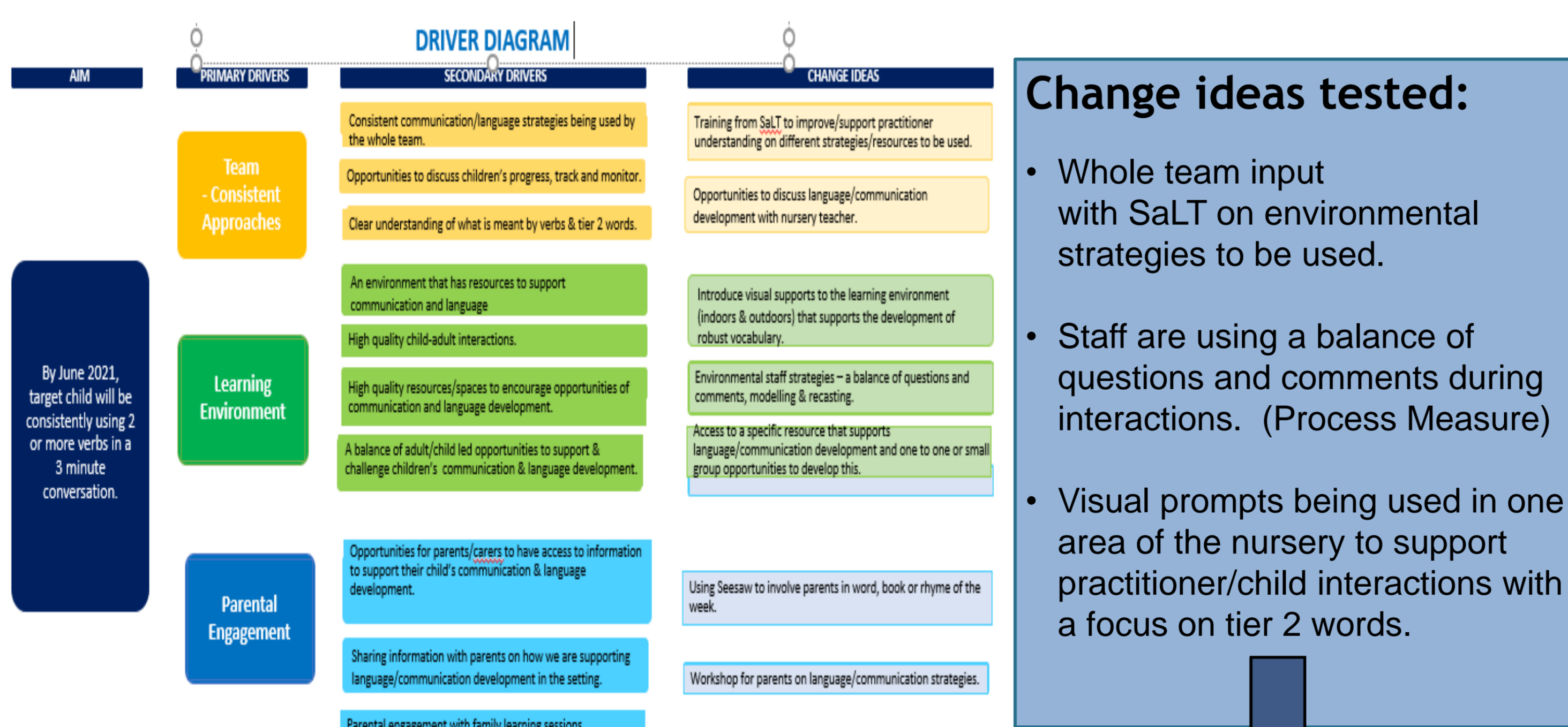
Aim: By June 2021, target child will be consistently using 2 or more verbs in a 3 minute conversation. (Baseline: children are using on average 1 verb in a 3 minute conversation).

Method

We established an improvement team consisting of a Nursery Teacher, 2 Senior Early Years Officers and a Speech and Language Therapist. From our e-LIPS assessments we were able to identify early on in our project that it was the 'saying' element of the assessment that the children scored the lowest in. However, being specific about what part of the 'saying' element we would focus on to enable us to measure improvement accurately, took us longer than anticipated and led to a delay in clarifying our aim. A significant amount of further assessment (recorded conversations during play, engaging with a text and completion of the Renfrew picture test) was required before we could nail our aim! With support from our Speech & Language Therapist, it was identified that improving vocabulary, in particular verbs (tier 2 words) would be our focus. From this we were able to clarify our aim and work out our baseline.

Process Change

All of the staff team at the nursery were involved in the completion of a fishbone diagram. This enabled good practice to be shared but also provided an opportunity for any challenges or barriers to improving children's language and communication to be discussed. From our fishbone diagram we were able to identify our primary and secondary drivers easily for our driver diagram.

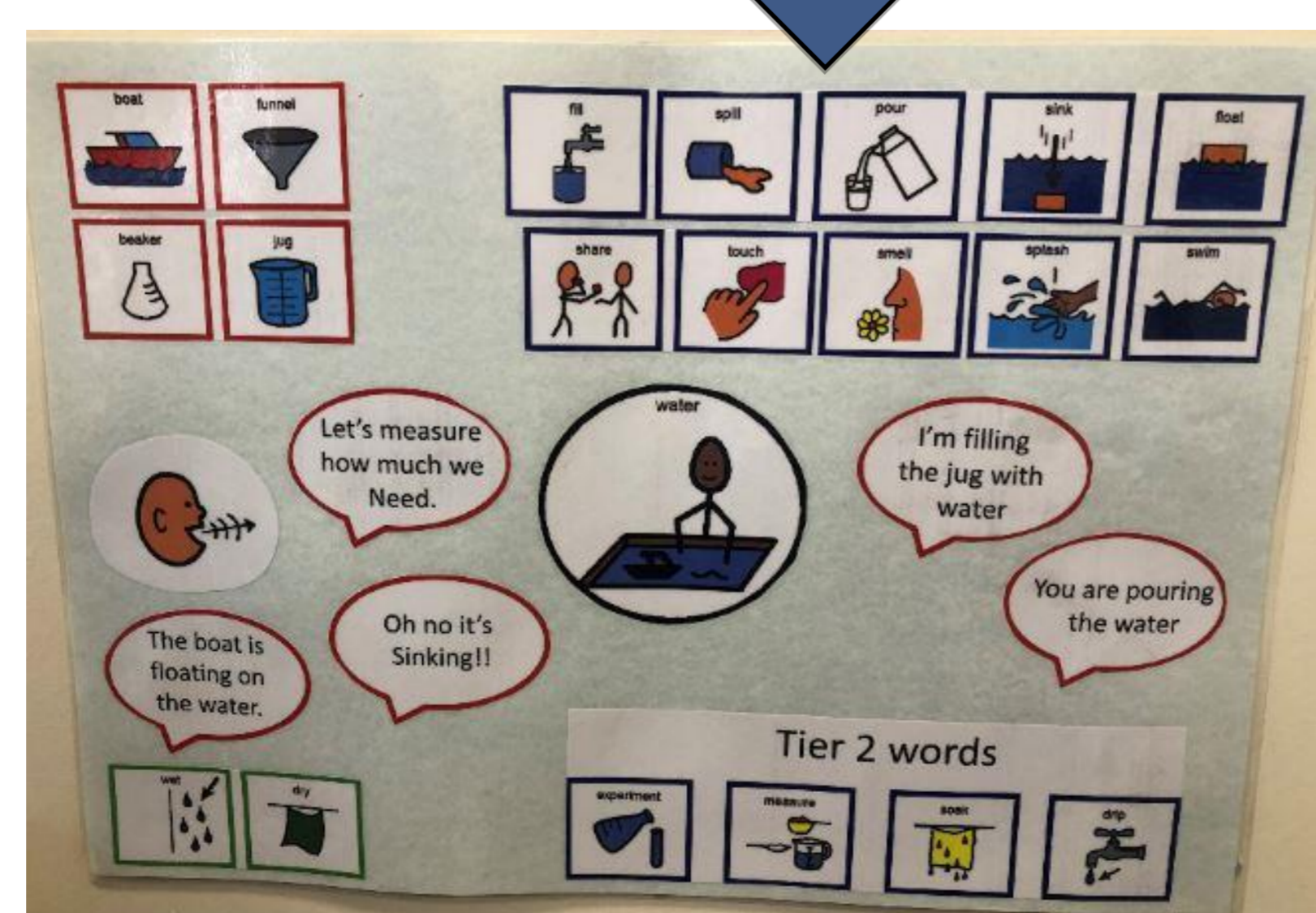


Change ideas tested:

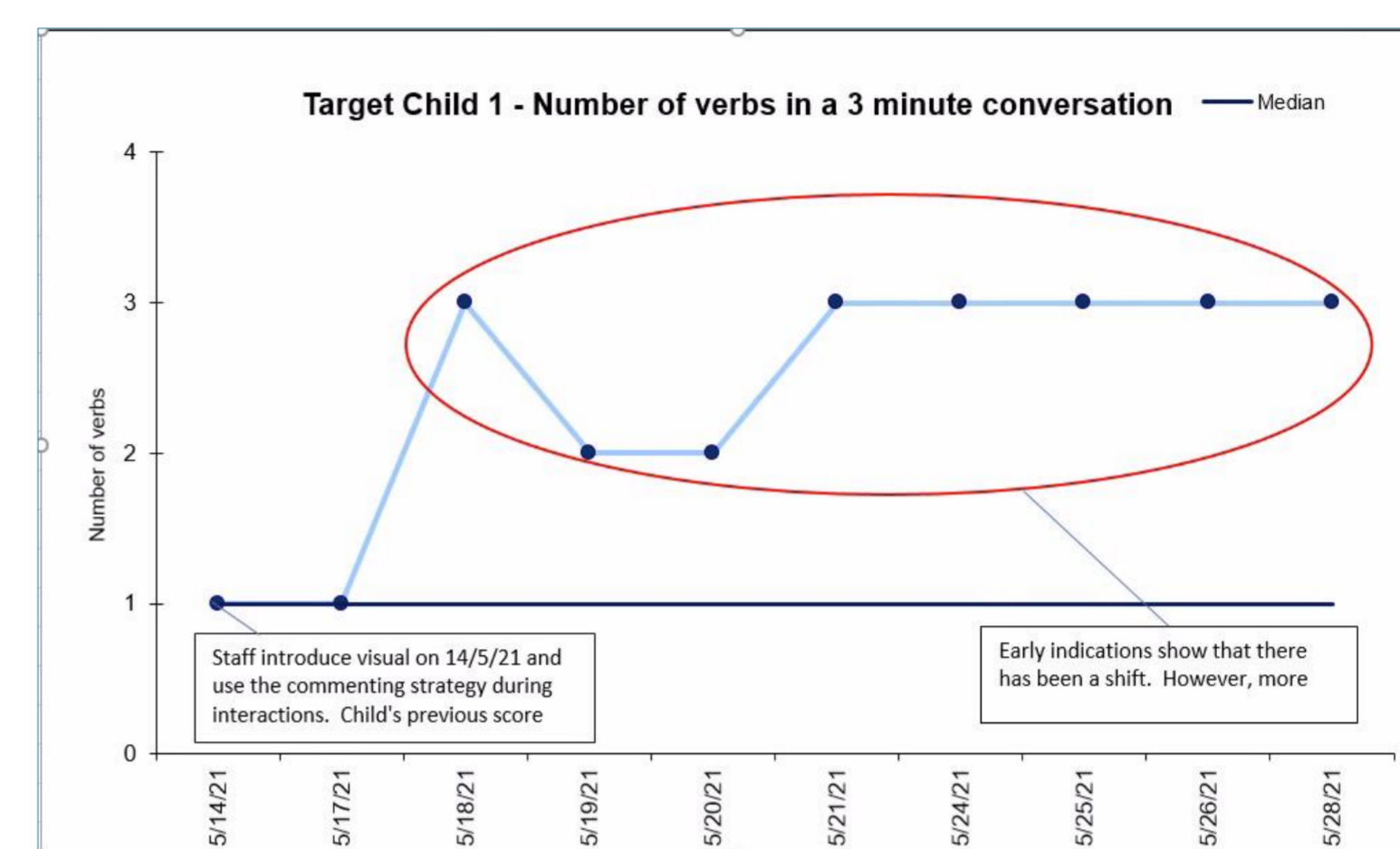
- Whole team input with SaLT on environmental strategies to be used.
- Staff are using a balance of questions and comments during interactions. (Process Measure)
- Visual prompts being used in one area of the nursery to support practitioner/child interactions with a focus on tier 2 words.



Fishbone helped us understand root cause



Results



Conclusions

- There are early indications that modelling the use of rich & robust vocabulary (tier 2 words) through the use of the commenting strategy is promoting vocabulary development.
- Limiting the amount of questions for some children and using more comments enables an improved flow of conversation.

Key Learning Points

- Time for high quality one to one or small group dialogue to take place during the nursery session has been very valuable.
- Opportunities to share knowledge/expertise with our Speech & Language therapist has ensured consistency across our staff team.
- Sometimes it takes a while to nail your aim!

"I am more aware of tier 2 words and how I can extend vocabulary." (Early Years Officer)

"I am more aware of how I interact with children. I feel that children engage more if we balance questions and comments." (Senior Early Years Officer)

Achievements

- The team are on board, motivated and excited about improving practice.
- Staff are reflective and are using strategies in their day to day practice that is having an impact on children's communication and language development.
- We have already started to see improved flow of conversation in some children.
- We've persevered and are committed to keep on going!

Next steps

- Continue with our project, spreading learning to other children.
- From our first PDSA cycle, practitioners have mixed views on whether a visual does help support with quality interactions. Our next step would be to try this with more than one area in the nursery.
- Continue to introduce more change ideas, particularly involving parents.

Reference: Education Scotland, February 20002. Realising the ambition: Being Me.