

Leadership and Management

Monitoring



Effective monitoring of staff and practice is a key task for leaders and managers to enable them to assess progress and identifying areas for development.

It is important to foster within the team a healthy perspective of the value of the monitoring process. It is possible that staff could feel anxious at the prospect or as though they are being scrutinised. What might be helpful, is to establish a sense of ownership of monitoring practice within the team – seeking feedback on what they feel is working well, what progress do they feel has been made, what areas for development do they feel needs work etc. It is a skill to be evaluative of your own practice, and staff should be supported to own both their achievements and their challenges.

How you choose to monitor practice is up to you – think about what will work well for the team, what will practitioners respond best to, what is going to make the most difference?

TASK 1

Photo bombs and feedback!

A snapshot in time can tell you a lot about practice. Spontaneously step into a room that is in session. Take a photograph that captures as much as you can, as swiftly as you can. Don't discuss it straight away. Leave the session to conclude and find a time to sit with the involved practitioners to talk about what the snapshot captured. It might be helpful to prepare some reflective questions to prompt discussion. Some suggestions can be found below:

- Where are the staff in the photo? What are they doing? Are they well deployed?
- Where are the children? What are they doing?
- Who appears to be engaged? What are they engaged in? How can you tell?
- Who doesn't appear to be engaged? What are they doing? Why do you think they are not engaged?
- What resources/activities are available? Does it reflect the curriculum intent?
- What level of interaction can you see?
- What opportunities can you see might have been missed?
- What do you think could be better?

It would be easy to argue that this was just a moment in time and that it doesn't reflect the session as a whole, but it is still a powerful tool to help you as a manager/leader, to provide staff with an outside perspective of their practice/provision. Effective monitoring sees a team approach in response to the findings, ensure that impact on practice can be seen. Staff should be encouraged to take responsibility for monitoring the quality practice and provision – this provides a sense of ownership and accountability.

TASK 2

How present are you?

How frequently do you spend time in the room with the staff and children? Whilst manager observations and room audits, etc. can be extremely helpful, sometimes simply spending an extended period of time in the room can give you a true sense of what is/isn't working well.

You can experience first hand the challenges staff face, the needs of the children, the fluidity of the routine, the effectiveness of the curriculum etc.

Allocate yourself a time in your diary each week that is 'room based only'. Utilise this time to observe practice and review the quality of provision.

Not only does this potentially free a member of staff some time to achieve other tasks, but it promotes a sense of kinship, allows you to model best practice and promote expectations – all whilst feeding you in the moment evaluation of provision.

Consider how you could feedback to room leaders/practitioners your observations and what you found through this practice monitoring strategy.