

Tales from The Totem Pole: 2-3 years



You'll know you've got him!" laughed Edward's mother when he first began to transfer into the toddler room; she described her son to Jenny, the team leader, as "extremely energetic and lively". The staff in the baby room agreed, explaining that Edward was always on the go – a confident toddler now! Edward's mother often asked for play ideas to support him at home in his enthusiasm for risk taking.

LITTLE POINTER: Staff supporting parents in their understanding of children's behaviour has positive outcomes.

Jenny asked that her staff should take time to get to know Edward as the 'whole child'. Sophie was to be his key worker. She made sure she allowed herself plenty of time to observe Edward closely during the transition period. At first, as Sophie watched, she worried how short his attention span was; he tended to 'flit' between activities, always seeming distracted by what someone else was doing. His constant coming and going tended to disrupt other children; moreover he showed no signs of developing relationships with them as he never stayed near any of them for long enough. After a while, however, Sophie began to be impressed with his greater than average physical agility; he would regularly, for example, execute a perfect roly poly.

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Mary is an early years consultant and trainer, and has worked across the private, public and voluntary sectors, including management roles in Barnardo's and Sure Start programmes. She is the founder of The Totem Pole early years training and resource centre, and last September won 'Trainer of the Year' at the 2011 Nursery World Awards. Visit thetotempole.co.uk or call 01476 578 200.

What's life really like for a child in his third year of life? **Mary Barlow** takes a look (with thanks to Little Oaks Childcare, Doncaster)...



LITTLE POINTER: Frequently it is the challenging aspects of children's behaviour that are most immediately obvious. However, it is important to take time to get to know the whole child so that we can focus on what they can do and on the positive aspects of their behaviour.

As he began full time in the toddler room Jenny supported Sophie to plan activities around Edward's physical prowess. Using boxes, tents, tunnels and den-making resources Sophie began to understand that she could adapt his learning environment to enable him to capitalise on his strengths. She started to notice that by tailoring the environment to suit the child he was able to build on other areas of development as well. As Edward was involved in building and changing the resources Sophie noticed that his concentration gradually began to improve; now he was doing something for a reason that he could understand he was motivated to stay for longer. Moreover, as he spent time in these, albeit large scale,

construction activities his fine motor skills also showed signs of development.

Other children also benefited from the challenging and stimulating provision as they enjoyed the activities. As everyone was included in planned games and activities all of the children, including Edward, began to develop negotiating and turn-taking skills. Edward even began to develop emerging friendships with some of the other children.

Edward continues to be a confident toddler, who takes risks and is supported to do so by understanding staff. Edward's mother remarked that at the weekend, as she had encouraged him to be busy and physical throughout the mornings, he had started to anticipate lunch and afterwards asked for his blanket and slept for an hour...

LITTLE POINTER: It is important for staff to recognise that the cycle of good healthy practice means children are refreshed and recharged for their afternoons.