

Readers, carers, and friends

Daniel has recently developed an interest or enthusiasm for babies, and much of his play is seen by the teachers in this setting as the re-creation of his own experiences.

Daniel found a doll lying on the floor and picked it up, saying "baby" in an excited voice. Next to me was a pillow and blanket, which I pointed out to Daniel, suggesting he might like them for his baby. Daniel smiled and dragged the pillow over to the doll, then covered the baby using the blanket.

He practised covering and uncovering his baby. I started singing "Peek-a-boo!", and Daniel would anticipate and wait to pull off the blanket. We laughed together each time. When the game finished, Daniel became very interested in showing me the baby's body, for example, its feet and eyes.



The teachers went on to share their stories with Daniel's mother, Lynne. This conversation has led to Daniel's new interest being supported at home as well as at the centre.

Today I spoke with Daniel's Mum about his sudden interest in and involvement with the dolls. Lynne commented that they didn't have any dolls at home, but she would see if Grandma had any. Then, as if to show his Mum what I was talking about, Daniel spotted the dolls in the cradle on the way out. "Babies" he yelled, smiling and bouncing up and down in Lynne's arms. Lynne let Daniel get closer to them and asked Daniel if he would like to say goodbye to them. With a huge smile, Daniel waved and said "Goodbye."

Daniel and George's friendship has continued to grow immensely. They can often be found sitting together looking at books, either in the book corner or in the middle of the floor where a couple of books happen to be. Today, for example, we invited the children to go outside. When most had raced out, we looked around the room, and who were in the corner ... but Daniel and George!



It seems that (aside from the common passion they share for books), whenever one of them becomes involved or interested in an activity or toy, it isn't long before the other is by his side, showing his interest, too. For example, this week, Daniel has become interested in the "babies" (dolls). Finding the dolls on the floor, he talks to them and puts them into bed. George, too, has joined Daniel on many of these occasions, watching Daniel first as if observing Daniel's interest in the activity, then becoming involved himself.



What's happening here?

Two toddlers are sharing an interest in books and in playing with dolls. This week, Daniel has become interested in the dolls (talking to them and putting them to bed), and George has watched Daniel and then become involved himself. Daniel and George have shared interests while developing a close bond.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

Daniel and George play out two socially and culturally valued roles, being a reader and being a carer, as they interact with books and dolls.

The children employ a variety of learning strategies, imitating each other (as they copy how to hold and look at books and pretend to put babies to bed), communicating in non-verbal ways, jointly posing and solving problems, and imagining.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

Two teachers jointly wrote this documentation, recalling and discussing what they had seen as they analysed it.

This lively record is one of "work in progress", and the readers (family and teachers) are thereby invited in. Consequently, they will wait with interest and support the next episode in Daniel and George's learning.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

There is strong detail here on the context of this play: the responsive and reciprocal relationship developing between the two children. Participation in education is frequently enhanced in joint attention episodes and trusting relationships. The teachers comment that "It seems ... whenever one of them becomes involved or interested in an activity or toy, it isn't long before the other is by his side, showing his interest, too."

The teachers responded to an interest by suggesting resources and adding words to actions.