

Irina believes in giving children freedom and confidence, and has found that an East Reading Children's Centre believes the same



Irina Hernon and her husband, Chris, live in Reading with their two sons, Zinovi, three and Luca who is eight.

An unexpected surprise

Irina's first experience of Katesgrove Children's Centre was when her eldest son was a toddler so she thought she knew what to expect when she started taking Zinovi to Groups there some years later. However, whilst she was pleased to be reacquainted with parents and staff she had previously met there, she was surprised and pleased to find many differences in the Centre itself.





"The quality of the facilities is excellent and I like the way that the sessions are run by professional staff who really care about the children, and who go out of their way to make sure that they are stimulated and given such high quality provision," Irina says. "There are so many toys and games to play with, as well as more structured sessions such as craft tables, or Music and Movement. They have a special area for the babies and the Sensory Room is beautiful, with lights, textures and soft play. I really like the variety, which means that whatever a child is interested in they have something to occupy them."

Life skills

Irina also likes the fact that the large open area allows the children to run around in the fresh air or to play on bikes and scooters, and in fact it was at the Centre that Zinovi learned to ride a tricycle, having had the chance to try out several kinds before finding one which suited him. "Zinovi is a very active little boy and because the Centre is such a safe place I feel quite happy to let him run off and do what he likes," she explains. "It's not possible nowadays to allow them the independence we had at their age so this environment is the next best thing in encouraging confidence and life skills."

Encouragement to experiment

Such confidence-building opportunities are something Irina feels strongly about, believing that this is key to future well-being. "I think it is so important that they

learn to experiment, to experience a range of different situations and to feel comfortable about encountering new people and situations. In an environment like the Centre, they can watch each other and learn from what they see and hear and that encourages them to try new things. The staff actively make an effort to get the children to play apart from their parents so that they start to become more confident, more independent and better able to make their own decisions."

A great deal of thought about what parents and children need

Irina has herself made many friends through the Centre and enjoys being able to catch up with them two or three times a week away from home. "This was another reason for going to the Centre," she says. "It is so important for children to get out of the house and to mix with other people, but it's important for adults, too. We can even have a cup of tea or coffee together as they have had the foresight to install high shelves for hot cups. A great deal of thought has gone into what the Centre provides, making it somewhere I feel very comfortable and happy to spend time."

Preparation for school ...

As a professional herself – a teacher of music – Irina can fully appreciate the value of an environment which provides not only enjoyment but an educational atmosphere for both parents and pre-school children. "I believe that all children need something like this, something which prepares them for school and gives them a greater experience of real life early on. It's not just a question of learning practical things such as numbers and letters, but absorbing everything going on around them, observing how other people react in a given situation."

...and preparation for life

Irina would strongly recommend Katesgrove Children's Centre for anyone who wants to give their child a sense of freedom, independence and confidence. "If they get to school age being able to stand up for themselves, knowing how to behave appropriately and have self-respect then they have had an excellent start to life."

For further information contact your local Children's Centre:

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