

**Children Under Three in Group Care
Settings:**

**A Study of Children's Experiences
and
Adults' Perspectives.**

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PhD

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CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY NARRATIVE 1

Georgina, Melanie and Martin

This case study looks at the experiences of three children in one day nursery. This day nursery is situated in the city and is unusual in that it has no access to outdoors other than when the children are taken out for planned activities and because all of the children who attend the setting (aged 0-5) are based in the one room with an area fenced off with a low level picket fence where the under twos are cared for. This latter feature means that when siblings attend the setting they can remain in contact with one another for the whole day. The parents who access this nursery come from across the region and have chosen it because they can work an extended day, collect their children just before the nursery closes and then travel home. Another reason is that parents want to have their children placed near to where they work so that they can get to the nursery quickly in case of any illness or emergency. "It is very near to work so that if I had to because there was an emergency I can run round in 5 minutes. It is that accessibility as well."

"I often work until 6.00 and I looked at the local ones and I would have been struggling if there had been an accident or something. I know they don't dump your child but I didn't want to be late every night."

The children are Georgina, Melanie and Martin and when I first started observing them they were aged 14, 12 and 7 months respectively, which meant that for the initial months of the observation they were all based in the younger area of the

nursery. The observations commenced in February 2005 and carried out monthly, where possible, until they reached the age of three. The parents of Martin and Georgina gave their permission for photographs to be taken and to be used within any published works but Melanie's mother did not consent to photography so there will be no photographs of her within this narrative study.

February 2005

Melanie is not present for this observation. Owing to the 7 month age difference Georgina and Martin are at different stages of development. Both of them are mobile, crawling and using the furniture or the fence to aid them with walking but Georgina is nearer taking confident steps on her own. Both of the children appear to be happy and content. When either of them cries the adult does not immediately scoop them up and comfort them, she waits to see if they can resolve the problem for themselves. Both of the children are mouthing resources and both make good eye contact. They are both alert to what is going on around them. Georgina is more vocal than Martin and there appears to be more of an urge to use language/sound to communicate. When Martin does want to be noticed he usually cries which ultimately results in him being comforted. Although Martin enjoys this close contact when he is unhappy he does not appear to need to be near or involved with the adult at other times.

Georgina, however, is more communicative, enjoys being in a conversation and is a babbler. This was evident when she was babbling as she helped the adult rock a

baby. Georgina appears to enjoy the company and interaction of adults. This preference could be linked to Georgina's attendance pattern of sharing her care between the nursery and extended family members.

March 2005

Martin is not present for this observation. Georgina is now walking confidently around the area. Georgina is an explorer and investigator she rarely stays with one interest for more than a minute, even when the adult has responded to her shown interest in boxes. Georgina does interact with me and the adults but she is not really involved in this. She shows me the heuristic resources as if she is expecting me to ask her to name them or for me to name them to her. When the adult starts to sing Georgina is briefly interested unlike Melanie who enjoys being close to the adult and being involved in what she is doing. Melanie's interaction with the adult is strong and it obviously pleases her. The adult shows her respect by asking her if she wants to come out of the bouncing chair and only moves her minutes later when Melanie gives her consent by holding up her arms indicating that she wants to get out.

On this occasion there is little vocalisation from Georgina whereas Melanie is heard babbling to her reflection in the mirror. Both children appear happy and content despite the differences in their needs.

May 2005

I thought that the children would have become accustomed to me but it appears on this occasion that my presence is causing Martin some distress. He persists in his strong eye contact with me even when I try to make my presence more 'invisible'. When he is playing in the tunnel with the other children he is happy but he is very suspicious of me and returns to staring and eventually deciding that he does not like my presence he becomes upset. The adults leave him to sort this out by himself but when he becomes more distressed he is comforted. When he is going to sleep I rock his bouncer to try and form a relationship with him; he is happy for this to happen. The children in this nursery are rarely seen with their dummies except at sleep time and it is interesting to watch Martin fall asleep loose his dummy but still making the mouth movements as if his dummy is still in.

The girls have shown no adverse reaction to my presence, although they do occasionally look hard at me. The differences in the choices that Georgina and Melanie make are becoming more obvious. Melanie is sharing a book with an adult; she is responsive, smiling, vocalising, obviously familiar with the book, interacting with the book by stroking the picture of the dog and by making the appropriate animal sounds. She is snuggling into the adult and not at all bothered when other children come along to join in. Georgina is one of these children but she does not get close enough to become involved even though invited to do so. She stands on the edge for a few moments before moving on to play with some bangles.

The girls' problem solving is also different. At one time Melanie gets stuck between two pieces of soft play but she does not bother, she quietly works out a way of positioning her body so that she can move away. Georgina on the other hand gets her shoe stuck in the fence railings and stands crying for an adult to come and get her out. The adult tries to encourage her to try different strategies to solve this problem but Georgina is diffident and expects the adult to do it for her. The adult persists and after a while Georgina begins to try, but it appears that she is used to having everything done for her and this is now an expectation.

When the girls access the resources that are on continuous provision Georgina chooses to go to the books to sit and look at them on her own whereas Melanie chooses a scarf and begins to play peek-a-boo with it. Melanie's play involves other people whereas Georgina prefers solitary play but needs the adult to solve all difficulties.

June 2005

Melanie is not present for this observation. Martin is now walking with confidence. His attitude to me is still the same and when he becomes distressed again after having studied me for a while, I get onto the floor behind the chair so that I am not so visible. This seems to have the desired effect and although he keeps checking that I have stayed there and stays quite close to the adult he becomes more adventurous until after seeing other children come and talk to me he appears to be quite happy to go off and play independently. Still checking every now and then.

When he does go off independently he shows his concentration by sticking his tongue out. He responds to his name and in his play he is babbling. Martin is sociable and shows that he has a sense of fun when he teases the adult.



Georgina's vocalisations have developed and she is now saying clear words (Teddy, shoe, and daddy) and she can be heard experimenting with the sounds that she makes. Interestingly when she says these object names she looks to the adult; I wonder if this is because she realises that talking is usually with someone or is it that she is looking for the praise that will come from speaking. Again the reliance on adult involvement is seen when she tries to open a bag, when she can not do it she gives up and moves on, a pattern of her play in that she never stays for long with any involvement. On this occasion the most time that she spends with anything is when she is looking at and playing with her shoes which she does revisit at various times during the observation. She is much more confident in her gross motor skills.



July 2005

Melanie is asleep during this observation. Martin's mother has requested that he is taken out for a walk every day and so the observation on this occasion was curtailed when he went out. He is, however, now not perturbed by my presence but does spend a lot of time studying me. This is also done by Georgina who spends a considerable amount of time studying me, but I think this is more that Georgina studies her environment in general. She really does study things intently and appears to be very interested in what is happening all around her.

Martin is beginning to engage in more meaningful play, seen when he is pushing the car along the floor. He is spending much more time on his feet.



Georgina, however, seems to be concentrating on her language development. At tea time she talks to the adult about her mother. She is stringing two words together and she indicates when she wants something. Georgina appears to be more relaxed and there is much more facial expression.



August 2005

It has been a long time since I saw Melanie. She is restless and appears to want to sleep but she is fighting it. Her eczema is troubling her. The adult interaction during this observation was of a high standard. The adult is next to her folding the blankets and Melanie engages in a game of peek-a-boo with her. When this is finished she wants a cuddle from the adult and as she is lifted up and she snuggles in. When she goes back in the bouncer she makes good eye contact with the adult. Melanie is happy and smiling. She starts to rock herself in the bouncer and wave her arms in time with the movements – this develops into strong bouncing; she is laughing and giggling as she does this. The adult then engages her with peek-a-boo behind her hands and encourages Melanie to cover/uncover her eyes so that they can play the game together. The adult then starts a game of asking questions, “What does the ...?” Melanie responds with the appropriate animal sound. This develops into,

“Where are your feet?” Melanie responds correctly to all of this and so the adult develops this further by asking, “Where are MY feet?” Again Melanie responds.

Georgina is again not engaging with either adults or resources. She is still doing a lot of mouthing. There is a moment when Georgina becomes animated and that is when I go to take a photograph of her; she stands in front of me and says, “Cheese” and “Picture” and she takes on a pose. She keeps repeating the phrases and continues to stand in front of me in the hope that I will take another photograph. None of the other children in the room were bothered by the camera and none of them showed this kind of reaction; again is this because Georgina is perhaps the centre of attention at home and is therefore continually having her picture taken.



Martin has moved his play forward with the growing confidence in his mobility. He now initiates his own play and is quite happy to be interacting with other children within this play. He is showing more signs of vocalisation. This is obvious when he is looking at the moving tree branches in the sunshine; he is fascinated and there is an increase in his vocalisations and babbling. Martin is now confident and independent and appears to have lost his fear of me.



October 2005

Martin has become a social player. He plays peek-a-boo with another child and then later on is dancing with another girl, they stand in the middle of the area and hold hands opposite one another and they start to dance - they clap and sway together.

This is very different from the play of the two girls who are older. Georgina is still a very solitary player and although Melanie does not engage in peer interaction she is more open to it and is not bothered when others join her. Melanie, however, does seem to need the reassurance of adult interaction and frequently goes to the adult for a cuddle or to show her something. Martin rarely seeks this kind of reassurance.

Melanie is the only one who has a comfort dog which she carries around and which she uses in her play, placing it in the baby bouncer and putting a bib on it.

Both Martin and Melanie show that they can sustain their interest in their chosen play whereas Georgina is still moving from one thing to another. Martin starts to build with the Lego, putting bricks on top of another child's structure. They start to build together. When the other child leaves Martin carries on building on his own - he is quite intent and is concentrating on his chosen task. He is building with bricks

and wheels and when it is complete he pushes it. You can see that there is a purpose to what he is doing and to the bricks that he is choosing. He sustains this activity and he makes brm, brm noises as he pushes the car. As he is building he has his tongue out, which is an indication of concentration. As he picks up the 'car' it breaks so he rebuilds it. He sustains this for 10 minutes.



Melanie also starts to build with the Lego. When she has put some pieces together she goes to show the adult. She stands in front of me and takes the bricks apart and then puts them together again. Melanie now starts to walk around with the bricks and singing. Her tower has fallen apart so she sits on the floor and starts to put them together again. This Lego play shows how Melanie and Martin are able to revisit their play and persevere with it when it breaks.

Georgina appears to be putting her energies into communication. She is talkative and frequently goes up to the adult to object name; does this come from home as there is very little of this within the setting. Georgina is still easily distracted by what other things are going on.

November 2005

Georgina was not present for this observation. When I arrive both of the children are asleep. Martin is the first to wake and as I was not there when he went to sleep his old uncertainty about me has returned. The adults leave him to awake in his own time. All of the other children are asleep so Martin is the only one playing. The adult gives him some books and some soft dinosaurs to play with. Martin becomes fascinated in the holes and circles in the book. When he leaves the book he uses the dinosaurs in some representative play by making them growl. His uncertainty about me passes as he comes up to me and blows raspberries. When I blow them back he starts to laugh. Martin has a good sense of fun and mischief and this is becoming apparent.



When Melanie wakes she is also unsure and stays very close to the adult who is feeding a baby. The adult talks to her telling her what she is doing and then suggests pouring but at the same time indicating her that Melanie put her blanket away in the drawer. This idea appeals to Melanie and she moves towards the drawers. She begins to pull the drawers out, looking for the right one. She perseveres and stands on tip toes to look inside the box to see if it is

the right one and if there is any room in it. Eventually Melanie decides on one and tries to push the blanket inside. The drawer is at a higher level and she is unable to push the whole of the blanket in so she just lets it fall out again. She picks it up and tries again. The adult who has been observing Melanie's progress suggests that she pulls the drawer out onto the floor and then to put the blanket in. Melanie does this and is successful in achieving her goal. Melanie now turns her attention to pushing the drawer back in. The adult is giving her encouragement but Melanie is looking at the adult and not where the drawer should be going and as a consequence can not align it properly. With further encouragement and suggestions to look at where the drawer is going, she succeeds.

December 2005

Melanie and Georgina are eating fruit and vegetables with the adult and there is a difference in the way in which they engage with this. Melanie is talking and interacting with the adult making comments about the foods that she is tasting. She is stringing words together, "I finished now" and is obviously enjoying the social interaction. Georgina on the other hand is merely interested in the foods; there is no interaction and comment about the foods that she tastes. Both girls go in to the role play area during this observation and again they approach it differently. Melanie goes in to make the adult a cup of tea and becomes interested in whisking and pouring but at the same time maintaining her involvement with the adult who is adept at extending Melanie's representative play. Georgina uses the resources in the

area without purpose and there is no interaction with the adult. Georgina also leaves the area when other children come in.

Both Georgina and Melanie make contact with me; Melanie to come and show me her dog and Georgina upon seeing the camera to say, "Cheese. Camera."

Melanie is animated in her play and responsive to the adult. Georgina appears to be more physical; the resources she uses in the home area are rolled and kicked.

This play is like Martin's. He spends the time kicking balls and other resources. Both Martin and Georgina use the kitchen resources as a climbing frame. Martin climbs into the sink hole and Georgina watches and then repeats the action when Martin has left the area. There is limited challenge in the gross motor play that is offered in the younger area and perhaps in this way the nursery is not meeting the needs of Georgina and Martin. The play that is on offer is more suited to Melanie who enjoys quiet play and adult interaction.



January 2006

Georgina has moved to the other side with the older children. She seems more excited and motivated. There appears to have been an increase in her self confidence. She has made the transition easily and is ready to be influenced and challenged by the older children and the environment. She is excited and happy and

there also appears to be much more interaction with her peers than there was when she was in the baby area. I am interested in the way in which Georgina is involving me; she has always acknowledged my presence but there seems to be a change, it is as if she is inviting me into her world, wanting to show me what has changed and how she has changed.

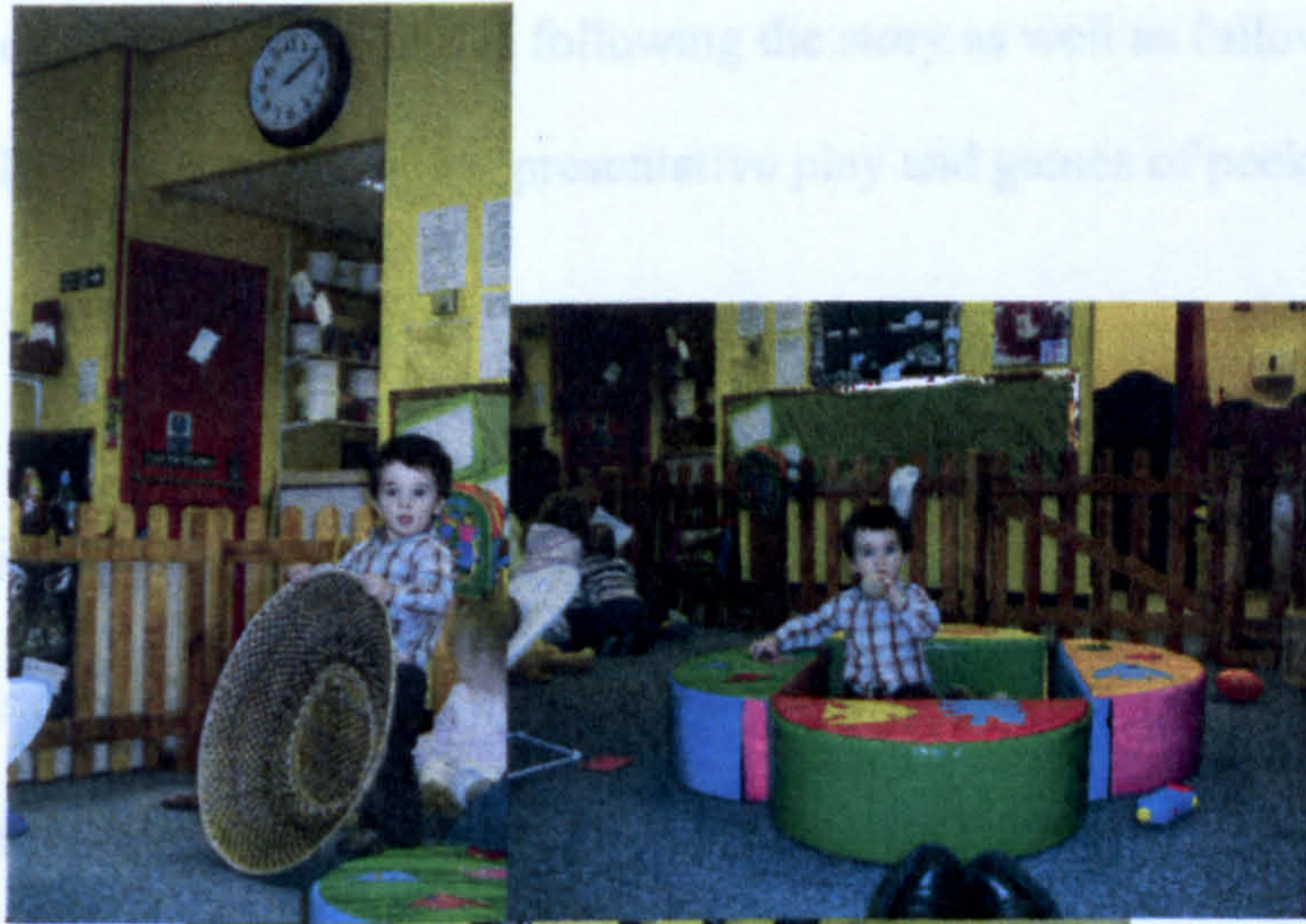
It is lunch time in the nursery and all of the children come together as a unit. Martin, Melanie and Georgina are all interested in eating and there is no vocal interaction to start with. Melanie and Martin do vocalise but for Georgina the only interaction is to name items of food for me. When she has finished the adult takes the glass from Melanie. She says "Thank you" followed by, "More orange please, thank you". Melanie is unique in giving the appropriate responses and pleasantries without being prompted and all the adults acknowledge this. Martin turns his attention to the girl sitting next to him and starts to play with her. Martin makes her laugh. He is smiling and happy as they begin to stamp their feet under the table.

The three children have different fine motor skills when they are using their knives and forks. Martin, although the youngest, is the most adept at using the cutlery. Melanie does have some difficulties but she does try before giving up and using her fingers. Georgina holds the knife and fork in her hands but does not attempt to use them.

February 2006

This observation highlights the different ways in which the three children interact with adults and other children. Melanie likes the company and interaction of the adults; she likes to get close to them and to snuggle in. There is little or no interaction with the other children, it all centres round the adults. Melanie appears not to like the other children invading her space. When this does happen she moves away and looks unhappy. Georgina seems to relate to adults more than the other

children although she does tell me their names and tells me about what they are doing. Much of the interaction and vocalisation when I am present is with me and she still uses this opportunity to name objects, although she can string words together. Martin engages in very little interaction with the adults and is quite happy to be on his own. Out of the three children Martin is the one who seems to be more comfortable with his peers. He sits in the ball pool with a baby and is quite happy for the baby to pull at him.



Melanie again shows her liking for books as she sits with the adult sharing a story. Melanie settles down to listen; she is interested; she is touching the adult's knee as she starts to listen. As the story progresses Melanie begins to snuggle in closer to

the adult. She is really settled and is following the story as well as following the pictures. Melanie also engages in representative play and games of peek-a-boo. This game is also a favourite of Martin's.

April 2006

Melanie has moved into the older area since my last visit and she seems to be happy in this new environment. Georgina is now fully established in the older area and she is chatty and communicative but not with the other children. She does not really engage in any activity but does a lot of moving around. Is it that there is nothing that grabs her attention? Georgina still seems to be flitting and only engages with adults. As on other observations she brings things for me to name.



Martin seems fascinated by the older area, is it that the younger area is no longer meeting his needs? He has discovered how to undo the gate to get into the older area. He does this quietly and without any fuss in the hope that no one will notice. When he is back in the younger area he is less animated.

I comment to the adult that I rarely hear Martin speak and she says that he frequently uses Spanish words, the language that is spoken at home, but that he does

not actually vocalise a lot. Melanie on the other hand is vocalising a lot and this is seen when she goes near the steps with a book and sits down to look at it with her dog by her side. As she is turning the pages she is talking, 'reading', to herself – she follows the words and pictures as she turns the pages. It is a nursery rhyme book and she is singing the appropriate song – The Grand Old Duke of York. She turns to me and starts to tell me what the pictures are. Melanie is very comfortable with her dog and her book. She is concentrating and she only looks up occasionally. The setting is obviously meeting her needs, but is this because they are easier to plan for?

May 2006

Martin has made the move into the older area of the nursery; he evidently 'escaped' so often it seemed appropriate to move him. Like Georgina in this area he appears to flit around looking for something to engage his interest but when he does he shows higher levels of concentration and involvement. The move appears to be meeting Martin's needs as he appears to be more challenged by what is on offer. His play in the sand and water areas show that he has good hand to eye coordination and that this type of play will engage and challenge him.



Since the last visit there appears to have been a change in the patterns of Georgina's play. Her play is more sustained and like the others, will get close to other children but there is no interaction. She is less interested in gaining my approval and is showing much more of an interest in her environment and the activities on offer. Although she is still flitting she is showing some periods of sustained play – play which she has planned. She rarely gets involved with other children but she is happy in her own company. When she goes into the home area she comes out carrying a doll. She wanders around for a while and chatters to herself. She goes back into the home area to get some blankets. She takes them all into the book area on her own. This is fascinating play; she is quiet and on her own and she is obviously recreating her own story. Sadly she is interrupted by a group of boys who also have the intention of playing where she is. She is not perturbed by them, she carries on with

intensity but eventually this gets too much for her and she carries everything over to the construction area with the intent of carrying on this play but she gets distracted by the big blocks and she starts to build with them. There appears to be a purpose to this and when she has finished she starts to walk along what she has built. She is concentrating and this is sustained play.



June 2006

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Melanie is still showing her great interest and enthusiasm for books. She is the only one of the three who uses her interactions with me to follow her own interests.

When she sits on my knee to share a story she sustains her interest and interaction until the end. During this observation I witnessed a rare occasion when Melanie was upset. This arose because she wanted to go for a walk with the others. The adult explained carefully and with respect why she could not go on this occasion and Melanie accepted this. Melanie shows that she has good levels of self esteem in that she is proud of the painting that she has done. The other two children have not shown this self assuredness.

June 2006

Since my last visit to the nursery Martin has had a brother and there has been a change in his behaviour within the nursery. I do not observe this but I do observe some of his interactions that are 'baby' related. He appears to be very interested in the buggies that the adults bring out ready to take some children out for a walk. Is it because he wants to go for a walk or is it the association of 'being a baby' in a buggy? It appears that he is not interested in going for a walk. Later in the observation he goes to visit a baby in the other area and he shows a gentle and affectionate side to his nature which is not evident in some other elements of his play. Martin is very physical in the way in which he interacts with the other children; not aggressive but definitely purposeful. This was seen when he tried to impose himself into a position where he could play on the computer alongside another child. He even resorted to trying to put a chair into where he wanted to be with the aim of gradually forcing the other child out. This play was seen again when a group of children were playing inside large cardboard boxes. Martin manages to push his way into this play. Martin appears to have a purpose in mind when he uses these tactics. He is a sociable child but it is not always what the other children want. Whatever play he is involved in Martin shows great levels of excitement.



The play of the girls on the other hand is completely different from Martin's. Georgina often shows that she wants to get involved in something but has not yet developed the skills to push herself forward. During this observation Georgina is less interested in me and so it is easier to see her play. She is showing good levels of independence and also some higher levels of sustained play. On this occasion she is much more vocal and is making some interesting connections. At one time she comes up to me to show me a plastic hose which I think she is beginning to use as a Hoover but she goes off again and returns with a fireman's hat on; not a Hoover but a fireman's hose.



Georgina is still not interacting directly with other children but is quite happy when Melanie and another child come to join in with the story that she is sharing with me. There is a big difference in the way in which Georgina and Melanie share books. Georgina is interested and does respond to the story but she cannot sustain this level of interest until the end of the book unlike Melanie who is engaged from beginning to end. This is a nursery rhyme book and Melanie shows her knowledge of the songs by singing the rhymes as soon as she sees the pictures. It is interesting that the other two girls do not know some of the rhymes whereas Melanie does. This

suggests that her knowledge of the rhymes does not come from the nursery but from home.

At the beginning of this observation Melanie is engaged in doll play. She is really involved in this play and only leaves it when she sees the opportunity to go into the book area to share books with whichever adult is in there. Georgina also engages in some doll role play and for the first time I see her engaged in some sustained play. She is putting the doll in a high chair, attempts to strap her in and feed her. Again Georgina is playing on her own but now she is concentrating and it appears that she has found a type of play which she can sustain and extend.

August 2006

Since my last visit to Tiny Feet day nursery Martin has left. After the birth of his brother his parents moved house and it was too far for him to attend. This means that this study will continue but as the study of the two girls.

When I start this observation the children in the nursery are getting ready for lunch. All of the children are involved with the clearing up except for Georgina. When they all go into the book area Georgina is not involved or interested. She appears to want to revert to her old patterns of play, rolling around on her own with no involvement with others. The adult tries to draw her in and Georgina does respond but there is little conviction in her singing.

Melanie on the other hand enjoys this area. When she goes in she goes to get a book and she sits at a low table involved with a book. When the adult prompts her to join in she brings the book to the centre of the area, sits on a cushion and returns her attention to the book. Unfortunately this is not good enough for the adult and Melanie is told to return the book and join in with the singing. Melanie complies and does join in the singing with enthusiasm. She gets up to sing 'Wind the Bobbin' up; she is confident as she sings in front of the others and does all of the actions.

During this visit both girls come up to talk to me and again there is a difference in this interaction. Melanie approaches me to explain that she has been to France with her grandma. This is a real conversation as Melanie pauses for me to give a response. There is expression, intonation and gesture.

Georgina on the other hand is more direct and just gives information. She comes up to me to tell me that a girl has "... got a butterfly", as she points to girl's hair bobble.

Another interesting interaction with Melanie occurred during their lunch when she looks up at me and says, "Have you got your glasses off? We waiting for pudding." I found this interesting as obviously she associates me with wearing glasses when I am writing. Is she telling me that I shall soon be able to put them on again when they have had their pudding?

October 2006

On this occasion I have a long conversation with Georgina. Within this conversation she displays her increased confidence and she is stringing words together to form sentences. When I entered the nursery I tried to sit to one side so that Georgina would not immediately interact with me, I wanted to observe her involvement with the others and to see if there had been any changes in her involvement. This attempt failed as Georgina sought me out to talk to me about her birthday, two months away. Other children come and join in this talk but Georgina makes sure that she always brings the talk back to her birthday. If any of the other children appear to be taking a dominant position in front of me, thus gaining eye contact with me, she moves position to ensure that she remains the focus.

Melanie comes to join in with this conversation bringing her rabbit with her.

Melanie has always had a comforter in the nursery and she tells me that this one is called Rosa. Her talk is confident and there is good intonation. When all of the children go into the book area there is again a difference in the way in which the two girls engage. The adult plays some music and from her bodily movements to the music and her subsequent dancing it is evident that Melanie has a good sense of rhythm. As Georgina and the others get up to jump around, Melanie is dancing.

When they join hands with the adult Melanie can conform to this group activity but Georgina soon breaks away as she can not conform to the group as the other children do. This pattern is repeated when they sit down to listen to a story; Melanie listens intently but Georgina soon loses interest and stares out of the window.

I have been concerned that my presence has been having an impact on Georgina's interactions and play and so I talked to the adults about her when I am not present. They say that she is happy to play alongside but she never really 'plays' with any one else. She is drawn to adult company, which is where I always see her perform. The adults also agree with my conclusion that Georgina has yet to find a type of play that truly appeals to her unless it involves adults.

November 2006

Georgina's non involvement with others and lack of sustained play persists on this visit. She moves from one activity to another with differing levels of involvement. She engages with me to ask where my camera is and when I explain that I did not bring it she loses interest in me and moves away. At one point Melanie asks me to share a story and Georgina joins us. Interestingly it is Georgina who chooses the story but she is the one who loses interest whilst Melanie stays on focus until the end. The book is about fighting and Melanie is willing to offer her opinion as to whether fighting is right or wrong. When I tell her that my throat is sore and ask if she will read me a story she does so. There is intonation in her story telling and her story works through the pictures; she also uses story telling strategies.

This is to be the last time that I observe Georgina as she is moving to America and also because she will be three in January. Although Georgina does not seem to have benefited socially from her time in the nursery in that I do not feel that the nursery was able to meet her needs and interests because they were hard to ascertain. She

has always been happy in the nursery and has never displayed any behavioural issues. She has formed good relationships with the adults who have tried various strategies to encourage her to sustain her interest in activities. As when she was in the baby area I feel that Georgina is always looking to be at the next level; she wants more challenge but as yet has not developed the strategies to access this through her play and through interaction with her peers. She has never sought older children to scaffold her learning as she has always stayed on the edge.

January 2007

Unusually Melanie is playing in the construction area during this observation. She is involved in building a train track. Although there are others in the area she is involved with this activity on her own. When she leaves the train track she becomes interested in the big blocks and she starts to build a tower and on occasions she calls to me to tell me that, "These are very, very tall." She is happy, laughing and begins to interact with me more and more, "Look at this tower now." She repeats this again and again until another girl responds. As the tower falls down Melanie shows her ability to revisit when she says, "We will have to build it again." As she builds she narrates her actions and the play develops as another girl joins in her play. The other girl, who is older, suggests that they make a wobbly chair. Melanie tells me that they are going to build a wobbly chair. There is active cooperation with each of them making suggestions, laughing and consulting with one another. They try each other's wobbly chairs to sit on and invite me to look at their chairs. Melanie is talking all the time.

The girls make a bench like seat but it is not that strong so they begin to build it again in a different way. They are persevering and when it falls down they laugh. The older girl is leading the play but Melanie is making a good contribution to the building and the planning. The older girl is challenging Melanie's play and moving her forward. This was a really interesting observation. Melanie has good play and social skills. She shows concentration and involvement. By playing with the older child, Melanie's play moves onto another level. Although the older child leads the play at times, Melanie is making strong contributions. When they make the wobbly chair it is Melanie who starts to sing SEE SAW which the older child joins in with.

This turned out to be my last observation of Melanie as she was ill in February and her mother took her on an extended holiday in March by which time she had turned three years of age.

Unlike Georgina the setting met Melanie's individual needs and she benefited from what the nursery could offer her. All of these children were happy, safe and secure within their environment but it was Melanie who gained the most from the experiences that the nursery could offer. Her interests were easier to identify than Georgina's and Martin's. Perhaps it is the lack of an outdoor area in this nursery which failed to meet the needs of these two children. They were both physical players and perhaps would have benefited from accessing a range of activities in a larger space.

The setting in this case study was based in one room, with a designated space for children aged under two. The children were able to interact with children who were both older and younger. This case study narrative, therefore, reflects points discussed in the review of literature.

Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (1978) was observed in the play of Melanie and an older girl where, because of their different learning styles and levels of development, they were able to challenge each other's learning and thus move it on to the next level. This concept of ZPD was also observed when knowledgeable adults were able to support and challenge children in their learning as when one of the practitioners empowered Melanie, through dialogue and encouragement, to successfully place her blanket in the drawer, something which when she first attempted it, she could not do.

The mixing of age groups in this setting was reflective of the findings of the Millennium Cohort Study (Mathers et al, 2007) which found that older children could raise the quality of interactions for younger children, albeit at the expense of their emotional development and needs. *The National Evaluation of the Nurseries Initiative: The Relationship between Quality and Children's Behavioural Development* (Mathers and Sylva, 2007, p.8) also supported this theory highlighting that, '... quality scores were significantly higher in these mixed age groups.'

The question raised in these two studies about the impact on children's (aged under 3½ years) emotional well-being was not evidenced in the setting in this study because the children formed relationships with a stable team of practitioners. These relationships are a link to the 'key person' (Elfer et al, 2003) and to the reflections of the parents in this setting when they completed the exit questionnaires (p. 112).

One of the areas of weakness in this setting which evolved during the case study narrative of these three children was the lack of or limited access to an outdoor environment. I felt that two of the children, Georgina and Martin, did not have their needs met because there was no outdoor area which the children could explore or access independently. The setting did try to take the children out a daily basis but this was by necessity adult directed. Unlike the vision of the McMillan sisters (McMillan, 1930) these children did not have the opportunity to engage with an area which could challenge their gross motor development or expose them to outdoor exploratory or sensory experiences.

CHAPTER 6

CASE NARRATIVE 2

Mark, Ben and Josh

This case study gives an overview of the experiences of three boys in one day care setting. Photographs of two of the boys are included. Ben's parents gave permission for photographs to be taken but did not return the consent form for them to be used within any documentation. The observations commenced when Mark and Ben were both 2 years 3 months old and Josh was 2 years 1 month. Ben and Mark attended full time whereas Josh attended for 2 half day sessions. Their parents had different reasons for putting their children into care. Both Ben's and Mark's parents worked full time; they chose the nursery because it was new and because it was close to their homes.

Mark's parents wanted a setting that helped to develop his social skills, "We were both shy and it was important that he wasn't. Yes I think the nursery helps with the social side" and also somewhere where he had good access to the outdoors, "Being able to get outside in the fresh air Because when we come home at night we can not."

Ben's parents wanted a setting that was not too big with large numbers of children, "When we went there it didn't look too crowded that was the main thing. We saw other nurseries in this area and they were very commercialised, much bigger with a

large number of kids.” Other important factors were safety, stimulation and socialisation.

Josh’s mother works part time and wanted a setting that could help Jo be more sociable, “... because he was quite shy ... to bring out his social skills”, especially with children of his own age.

The observations started in February 2004 when the boys were all in the same room.

Mark

When I first started to observe Mark it is obvious that he has trouble separating when he is dropped off at the nursery. He is usually dropped off by his father and he has a routine of standing and waving goodbye to him. He needs strong adult support for those first moments; this is usually in the form of cuddles and continued adult closeness for a period of time. When he does settle Mark shows that he is a sociable child. He gets excited when he knows that one of his friends is arriving and this makes it easier for him to leave the side of the adult.

Mark has good communication skills and is willing to verbalise and initiate talk with those around him, including me. He interacts with his peers and has moved on from solitary play although he does enjoy activities that are solitary. He sustains his play for long periods of time but needs the assurance of adults and other children.

The other children follow Mark in his play and he appears to enjoy his role as leader. This role often means that Mark is distracted and he easily becomes engaged in physical play that often gets him into trouble. Mark can sustain his interest in activities but because of the lack of challenge he rarely maintains his play and his learning. The adults frequently miss out on Mark's play and fail to move him forward or challenge him. This was seen on one occasion when Mark was moving chairs around so that they were up against a table; he is constantly looking under the table to see what effect this has had. Mark is trying to make himself a den but the adult does not notice and support him in his endeavours and he soon loses interest and then becomes engaged in some rough and tumble play which elicits negative responses from the adults in the room.

Mark enjoys books and will maintain his interest in them if he is supported by an adult but this support is frequently absent. There is a male nursery nurse in the room and he has formed a good relationship with Mark. At times Mark is territorial about this nursery nurse and gets upset when other children join in or intervene. Mark on these occasions can be aggressive but he is quick to realise and will offer his apologies or a cuddle without being prompted. This sensitive side to Mark's character is frequently missed by the adults.



Mark is aware of how to gain the attention of the adult. He sees that the child who knocks his tower over gets attention, albeit negative, and so Mark copies this behaviour.

Mark shows an interest in mark making and on many occasions comes to ask me for a piece of my paper; this becomes a ritual of several of my visits. He enjoys sitting alongside me and writing as I am doing.

Mark is a physical child and although the setting has an outdoor area the adults do not make full use of this. Mark would really benefit from more gross motor play and an area where he could develop his good coordination skills. This lack of access to the outside area is contrary to one of his parents reasons for choosing the nursery.

When Mark has a sister there is a change in his temperament and behaviour. He does not want to talk about the baby and whenever something upsets him he throws

himself on the floor. During this period Mark is not as happy as he was and is less involved with the other children.



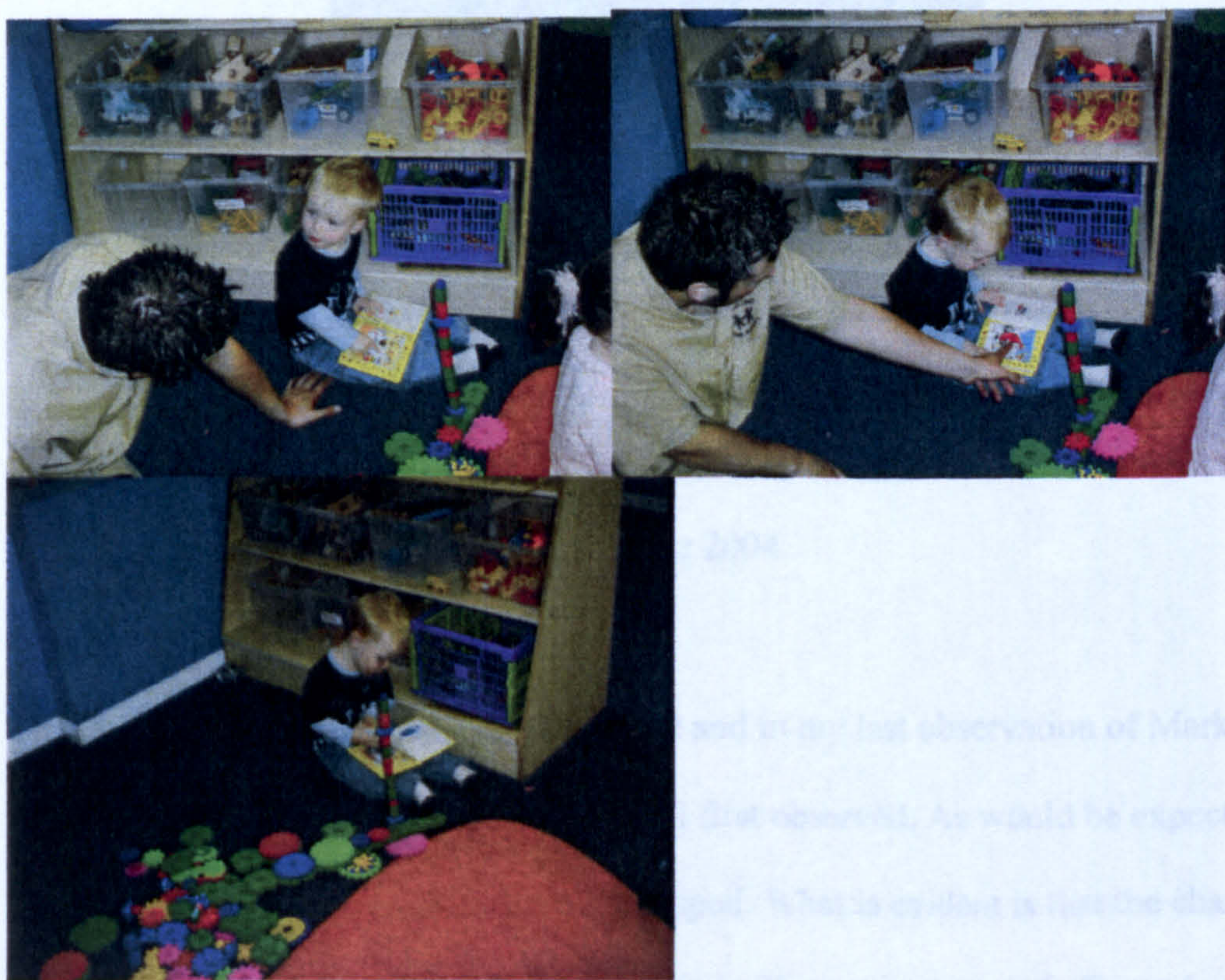
August 2004

The following sequence of photographs shows how Mark can be involved.



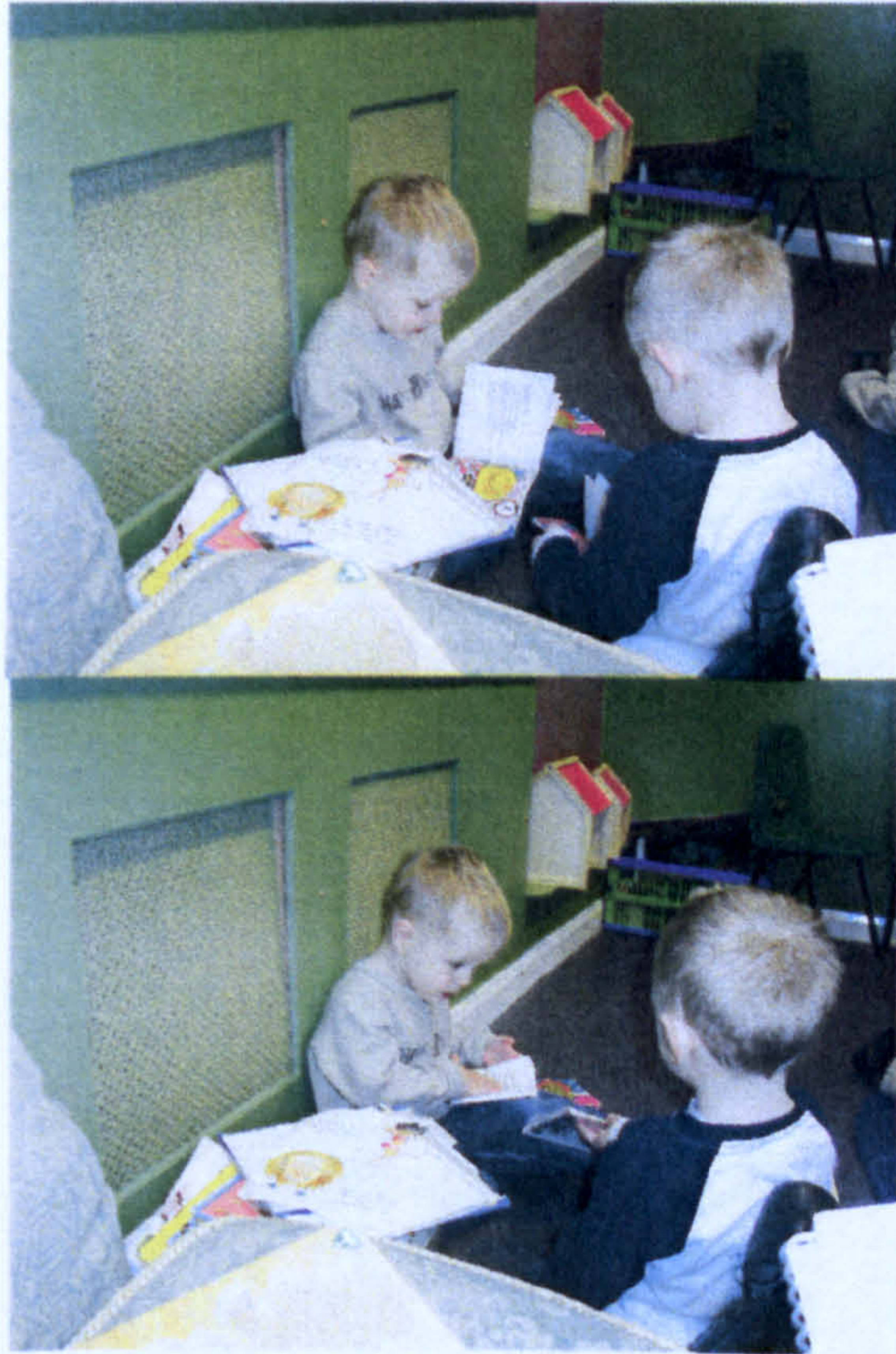
The arrival of a new adult in the room has had an effect on the way in which Mark engages with the activities and resources. Now when sharing books the adult supports him and extends his learning; there is challenge and Mark responds to this.

This adult also gives him responsibilities and Mark is responsive to this. As a result of this there is less adult negativity in the room and Mark is less involved in physical play with the other children. Mark's involvement with books develops over this period and when he handles the book he is concentrating and reading. It is clear from conversations that books are a feature of his home play. He also uses books and home experiences to extend his imaginary play.



June 2004

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December 2004

This development continues over the period and in my last observation of Mark there is a marked difference to the boy that I first observed. As would be expected his physical and language skills have developed. What is evident is that the change of adult and room had a marked effect on Mark. The environment challenged and excited him and he was given good support. As a consequence Mark became engaged and no longer got into 'trouble' for his rough play.



Josh

Josh separates well from his mother. He is passive in the way he interacts with the environment and with other children and adults. Josh is a watcher; he studies the environment and the people in it but he does not interact with them. Josh waits to be invited into any activity but when he does engage he concentrates and perseveres.



His language is clear and he is clearly stringing words together. When the adults sing songs it is clear that Josh is interested as he becomes animated and joins in. He knows the songs and the actions.

Josh shows that he has an early understanding of number as he engages with me and tells me the numerals that are on the jigsaw pieces.

Socially Josh does not mix. He prefers to be on his own and shows his dislike whenever anyone invades his space.

When Josh moves rooms it appears to unsettle him and he spends most of the session isolated in a big chair. He is content within himself and only occasionally makes contact with the adult. Josh demonstrates his language skills throughout the

observation. I feel that the adults are unaware of his language and play skills and are not offering him enough challenge. When the children are offered a painting activity Josh is excited by the prospect but it is not very exciting, it does not live up to Josh's expectations. There are numerous occasions when there are missed opportunities to move Josh forward in his learning.

Josh is a child who is content within his own space and he engages with others on his terms. He appears to set his own challenges; he is interested and excited by all that engages him. His interaction and play skills are sophisticated as seen when he engages with me. This is an episode when we play the musical instruments together. There are times when Josh is waiting for me as I have not reacted quickly enough when copying the rhythm that he has beaten out. It is interesting that this is the first time that Josh has come to interact with me, he appears to lack confidence but he shows more confidence during this observation. He is excited and needs challenging and extending.



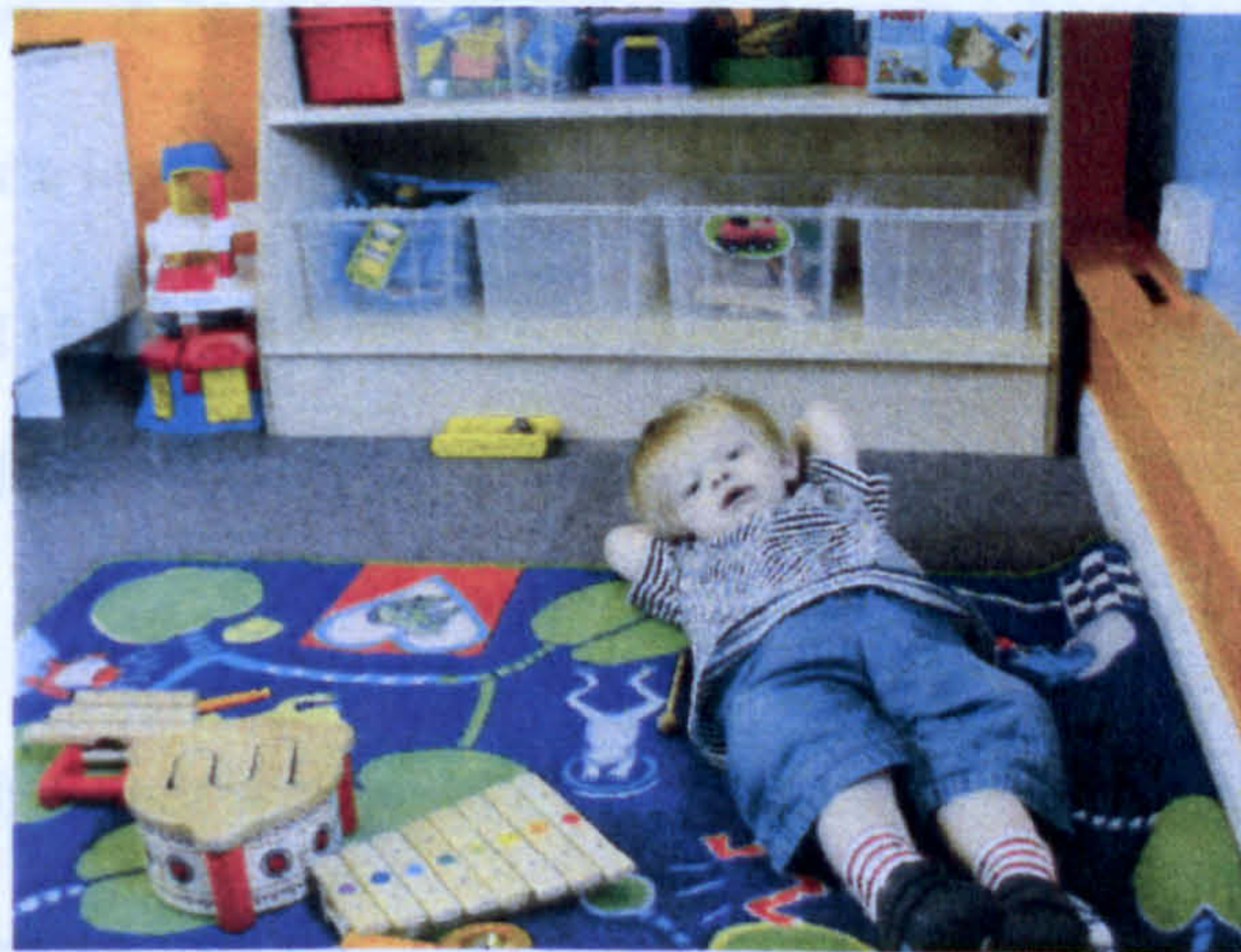
Josh shows a lot of perseverance. Looking back at the first observations and the comments made by his mother as to her reasons for putting Josh into nursery, in order to develop his social skills, I would say that this objective has been achieved; he is safe and secure in his environment and he is not disturbed when other children invade his space.

Interestingly I think the challenge for Josh now is for the adults in the room to give him appropriate challenge. I have noticed that Josh is interested and enjoys engaging with the musical instruments and yet I do not think the adults have used this interest to extend his learning. Josh is very popular with the adults in the room and they are fascinated by his language and are aware of his abilities but they do not see the need to move this forward. I would suggest that the majority of Josh's language and learning has come from home. I think that this is evident in the way in which he approaches reading and the way in which he handles books. From the evidence of the other children and from the way in which the adults interact I would suggest that this is not taking place in the nursery.

On the last observation that I carried out on Josh it is apparent that Josh has still not engaged with his peers and that he could be further challenged in his social interactions. He would benefit from support to enable him to play with others rather than alongside. Josh is a very compliant child who causes the adult no issues and therefore is left to his own devices.



The following photograph is a visual description of Josh,



Josh left the nursery to attend a local playgroup prior to moving house. I observed Josh in this playgroup, which I supported professionally. He has adapted well and obviously finds no difficulty in entering new and strange surroundings; he has no settling in problems.

Ben

Ben was present when I interviewed his parents and it appears that he remembers this occasion as he acknowledges me and makes eye contact instantly. Ben appears

happy, safe and secure and he spends much of the time smiling. Ben does not interact with the other children; he is not bothered when they come to play alongside him. When the adult initiates singing Ben is smiling but he does not join in. Although Ben is a confident walker he prefers to crawl.

Although Ben does not interact with the other children he is assertive and when they challenge him he stands his ground. He is also determined as he frequently gets what he wants from other children.

Ben shows an interest in books. He handles them correctly and will sustain his interest in them for a long time. He also shows this same level of concentration when he is playing in the sand. He works out strategies for negotiating spaces as he transports the sand from one area to another.

Ben plays peek-a-boo, but with no one in particular. He is fascinated in this play and eventually engages with me across the room so that he can play his game with me.

Ben's interest in books continues and his eyes can be seen to be scanning the pages as if he is reading. He studies the pictures closely. Interestingly he is drawn to where adults are reading stories with other children but he sits on the edge. At no time does the adult notice his interest and so he fails to have any interaction when engaging with books.

Ben has good levels of concentration for his age, he is active and curious. He makes choices and is positive when he makes them. As he gets older Ben is making more babbling sounds as he is playing but not with his peers or the adults. When he does communicate with the adults he uses gesture.

When Ben accesses the outside area he loses his self confidence. When the other children approach him it is as if he perceives this as a threat.

There is still no interaction with adults or peers as Ben moves into a new room. He is obviously happy and there is an increase in his language. When he does become engaged in an activity he is absorbed and will sustain his play.

Now Ben is older his fear of the outside appears to have disappeared and he is quite comfortable engaging with this environment. He is laughing and he is willing to have a 'go' on the resources that are on offer. His play in the outside environment demonstrates that Ben has good coordination as he runs around the area and negotiates his way around using wheeled resources. When outside he no longer seems to perceive the other children as a threat when they approach him.

As Ben grows older there is limited use of language. He does communicate with the adults and other children but this is usually through expression and gesture. He is involved in his play but the adults do not appear to pick this up and so he is missing challenge and the opportunity to move forwards.

This lack of challenge is seen in one observation when it appears as if Ben is in an 'enclosure schema'. He continually hides things and also tries to hide himself on a shelf but the adults do not see this and do not give him further opportunities to develop this. This observation is made 10 months after I started observing Ben and there has been no increase in his levels of interaction with either adults or children. He is not unhappy but to some extent he is not moving forwards.

When Ben is observed two months later he is showing some levels of interaction with his peers and for the first time he interacts with me. He wants to use my pen and paper; I let him. He shows that he has good pencil control and he is responsive as he talks to me. Ben's language is developing in that he is now willing to have a conversation with me. When he goes to listen to an adult reading a story he is still, quiet and absorbed. He turns to tell another adult what the story is about.

Ben is showing high levels of concentration in his chosen activity. When he is 'switched on' to his activity there is an increase in his levels of language. He can be seen to be concentrating and moving his own play forwards as he works out strategies to achieve his own goals; no adults are involved. When he has completed a model he is proud of his achievements and shows it to anyone who will look at it. When he talks to the adult about his construction he is animated.

There is no further development in his interactions with his peers. He prefers to be on his own and perhaps this is why there is also very little adult interaction; he is quiet and compliant so he is left to get on.

During these observations one of the adults talks to me about her concerns for Ben. It appears that when another member of staff baby sits for him he is a different child to the one that they see in the nursery. He is more talkative at home and she wonders if there are language issues, as English is his second language. I do not agree but I do agree with her opinion that Ben is a clever boy; this coincides with my feeling that Ben is not being sufficiently challenged by the adults.

On one occasion Ben is very interested in taking the trains into the sand but the adult stops this by telling him that they do not belong in the sand. I play alongside him in the sand and he enjoys making mould shapes. He becomes interested when another child starts to sweep up the sand so he goes to get himself a brush; the adult sees this and again stops his play. This intervention by the adults was neither necessary nor recognising Ben's learning needs. The adults need to come out of supervision mode and react to what Ben is doing.

This supervisory role by the adult does not improve as they create rules such as only one child painting at a time! Again Ben waits and again he is bored and uninspired by his environment. He is much more social and there is a higher level of involvement with the other children.

Ben enjoys adult interaction and he brings me a book to share with him and follows this by engaging me in his different play activities. He brings me food and tells me that it is hot. There are no concerns about his language now.

When I come to do my final observation of Ben he has made some major developments. He is now a social child who enjoys interacting with the other children. He plays cooperatively. The adults are involved in his play and he responds to this by being more communicative and responsive.

These observations of the three boys highlight some of the same issues. The boys have different needs but the adults do not use their observations to move them forwards. The major issue is the one of interaction at an appropriate level and also involvement in the boys' self initiated play. As the case study shows when there is a change of adult the boys respond to the challenges she offers them but this is not consistent across the team. Each of the expressed wishes of the parents have been met and the boys are all happy and contented but there is a missing factor when it comes to learning. The adults give the boys good care and a safe and secure environment but they do not seem to realise the need to move the children forwards. Both Ben and Josh are quiet and cause the adults no behaviour issues; Mark on the other hand is much more physical and this gains him adult attention but usually for the wrong reasons.

As in Case Study Narrative 1 (p.195) the three boys in this case study were given limited opportunities to access the outdoor environment as advocated by the McMillan sisters (McMillan, 1930). For Mark and Josh this could have been an area to challenge them in their learning and for Ben an opportunity to build his social competence with his peers in different environments. For Mark good access to an outdoor environment would have suited his learning styles, which was recognised by his parents when they say that access to outdoors was one of their main reasons for choosing this particular nursery.

All three children in case study narrative 2 separated well from their parents but as the observations illustrate there were times when the children did not form strong attachments to the adults in the room. When a new adult joined one of the rooms all three children bonded well with her and because she used her knowledge of the children through her observations she was able to challenge them and move their learning forward. This was particularly true for Mark, who when he was supported and challenged by this adult changed his behaviour and appeared to be more settled. Mark's reaction to the care offered by this adult is in line with the EPPE (Sylva et al, 2003) and the FCCC (Leach et al, 2006) study findings that the quality of adult child interactions had an effect on the outcomes for children.

CHAPTER 7

CASE STUDY NARRATIVE 3

Simon

The observations of Simon started when he was eight days old. He is the youngest of three children and the only one not to have gone into care outside of the home. This case study differs from the others not only because they have taken place in his home, on his own territory but also because his mother has been present and provided me with a tape recorded commentary of Simon's development in the period between observation visits. This is the diary of that development.

Simon was a caesarean birth and was bottle fed. His mother's difficulties in breast feeding her first child with what she felt caused initial bonding problems meant that she opted to bottle feed her two youngest children

Ruth – mother

Nick– father

Luke - older brother aged 5

Millie– older sister aged 2½

Simon – observed baby

August 2004

The bond between mother and child is intense and noticeable. When Ruth talks Simon is alert and responsive to her voice. Ruth is trying to encourage Luke to talk to Simon but he finds this awkward and does not get close enough to engage with

his baby brother. Millie, on the other hand, has no awkwardness, only a desire to get really close, sometimes too close and too rough.

Simon's awareness to other sounds is apparent as he responds to environmental sounds, especially the phone.

After his feed Simon falls contentedly asleep, his whole body relaxing as he nestles into his mother's shoulder. As he sleeps he moves his hands frequently in an unusual gesture. This gesture is repeated when he wakes. In her commentary Ruth describes how she can already decipher the differences in Simon's cries, another example of effective bonding.



When he wakes Ruth talks to Simon telling him that she is going to change his nappy.

During this first observation Ruth talks about how Simon has fitted into the family and how she feels in this new role of mother at home, two topics which will be revisited throughout this study.

September 2004

During this observation we return to the impact that Simon is having on the family and visa versa. As Ruth has to take Luke to school and Millie to playgroup, Simon's routines have to be established around them. There is a development in the way the other children are responding to Simon. Luke's interaction has developed in that he will now talk to him, possibly because Simon now gives a response. Luke is also aware of how to interact appropriately whereas Millie is still physical, a more hands on approach. Millie, unlike Luke, has little understanding of spatial awareness and frequently gets little response from Simon. Luke is perhaps more aware of Simon as a person as he watches quietly and picks up on Simon's responses.

An early interesting impact of Simon's presence is Millie's more sustained interest in baby and domestic play. There does not appear to have been any sibling rivalry or any reaction from the older children to Ruth being at home with Simon whilst they are at school and playgroup.

Over the last month Simon has begun to show likes and dislikes, such as being held. He also has preferences in the way he is held, and it appears that unless it is time for a feed, he does not mind being held by strangers as long as it is done properly. He's

more alert and he is beginning to respond to the voices of his father and brother. Simon's responses to the children are more evident when they are sitting quietly next to him as opposed to their more robust play.

Ruth remarks that at times Simon's stare is very intense. He is beginning to show his personality when he gets very angry, it is over nothing and he stops very quickly. We again discuss the differences in Simon's cries and Ruth is able to describe them in detail along with other indicators.

Yes there is definitely one of those, a bit fed up, not really sure and those ones we're trying to leave a bit longer with because sometimes he will just give up with it. It sounds like a cry but a lot more spaced out in between and a lot weaker, there's not really that much effort in it. Whereas when he gets angry he will be covered in sweat, his hair will be soaking wet – when he definitely wants something, there's a real difference between it.

Simon is showing preferences for places; he likes the bathroom, whether it is the brightness or the sound of water and this is where Ruth can take him if he is unsettled and needs calming. He does not like the car but enjoys being in his pram. This is really fortunate as he spends a long time in the pram when the others are being walked to and from school.

These discussions about Simon's early preferences show how important it is to form relationships with parents when children go into out of home care. If these preferences are utilised within the setting then the relationship with the child will be much stronger.

Whenever Ruth does anything to Simon I notice that she always gives explanations. This is also noticeable in the way in which she interacts with the other children. There is a part of this observation where Millie is trying to interact with Simon and this following explanation from Ruth is perhaps the reason why she can later make the following remark about Luke and Millie's relationship with Simon.

Both of them have amazed me really, they've been absolutely fine with him, they haven't flinched and as I say Luke has – he went to my mother's for the day and when he rang to say what time he was coming home he said, 'How is Simon? What is Simon doing?' He asked directly after him.

Millie appears with something in her hand which she tries to give to Simon;
R: No it's too small, Millie. It's too small for Simon.

M: Why?

R: Because he shouldn't have little things.

M: Can he have this?

R: No he shouldn't have little things. When he is a bit bigger he might put it into his mouth. We don't want that so we don't give him little things. He'd like to look at you. He likes you, he does. *Meg goes in closer*. Whoops did he bump your head? You get in too close Meg; you have to stand back so that he can see you. He can see you now. Can you see Millie, Simon?

M: It's off the dinosaur mummy.

R: Yes it is off the dinosaur, yes. We'll have to be careful. We have to keep it for Luke. Oh Simon you're getting all fidgety. *Millie kisses him*. He'll never be short of kisses will he Millie? Look he's looking at you. He thinks you're great doesn't he?

In my talk with Simon I am interested in the way he responds by moving his mouth and also the animation of his body movements, especially his hands. These movements now mean that Simon can interact with some of his toys as he knocks them and makes them move. Simon makes very few noises when awake other than crying and then, "... he cries in a daa sort of way, or a gaa sort of way. Very glottal, in his throat. A lot of la, la sounds when he is crying..."

The importance of talk, interaction and relationships come out very strongly in this observation.



October 2004

It is half term and Simon's siblings are at home. As Simon is being fed, with his eyes locked onto Ruth's face it seems appropriate to start with the developing relationships between the children. It appears that Luke's calm and quiet attitude towards Simon has meant that a bond has been established. Ruth feels that this is because Luke is patient with Simon and as a result Simon rewards him with smiles, positive feedback which means that Luke will continue. Millie, although at home more with Simon during the day, is less likely to interact with him. She is young and very physical; she really can not wait long enough for Simon to respond so she is not rewarded. She loves it when Simon grabs her and interprets his movements as

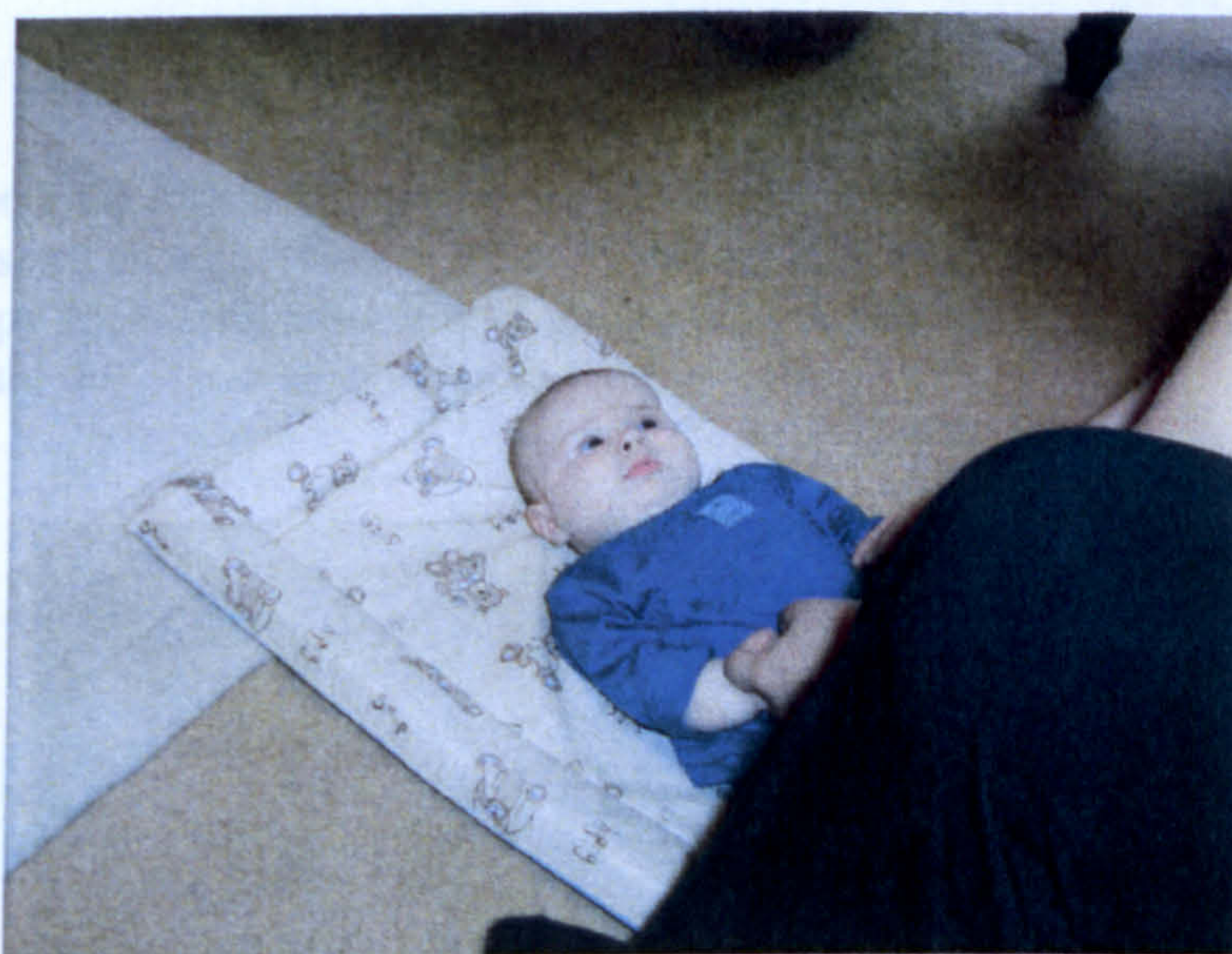
purposeful. Millie's doll and domestic play is developing as she has started doing it at playgroup.

Simon's character is also taking shape as he is a 'laid back' character for the majority of the time but also with a strong will. The car is still an area of great dislike. He goes with Ruth and Millie to a weekly 'Messy Morning' which is noisy, this does not appear to bother him; he is happy to be held by others and he is not perturbed by the other children. This is interesting to Ruth as she could not have perceived of doing this with Luke. Is this because Simon has been aware of other children from birth, whereas Luke was the first born? With Luke Ruth felt that she continually adapted to suit him whereas with Simon she is much more flexible and so situations have not arisen as they did with Luke. Within this Ruth sees the needs of Nick and herself as being important which was not necessarily the case in the past.

Looking at Simon as an observant baby leads to discussion of how he tracks, "...if Luke comes in and walks around he (Simon) will follow him."

When Ruth puts Simon down on his mat he becomes instantly agitated but once he makes eye contact with his mother he immediately quietens, this calmness intensifies as Ruth holds his hands by his side. This is a favourite interaction and links in with the fact that Simon still likes to be swaddled when asleep. Simon begins to get agitated but again the instant Ruth begins to interact with him he

settles. Ruth uses gentle tones and directs her speech to him as she makes eye contact. Simon responds by moving his mouth in reply; this is definitely a conversation. Simon responds to me taking a photograph and distant noises from the hall way. When the others come in it is obvious that he focuses his attention on Luke.



At times in the observations I ask Ruth about her personal choices of giving up work and staying at home. She wanted to return to work after the other two were born and she found the maternity period difficult for it made her conscious of time and the need to remain current within her profession, whereas the decision this time is to leave work and have a change of direction when she is ready to return. Pressure off!!

December 2004

At the start of this visit I hold Simon and he is fine but is this because he still has Ruth within sight. Ruth comments that he does notice if she leaves the room and cries until she returns. This leads on to discussing Nick's role and status with Simon, especially as he is with Ruth full time. There is a difference and uncertainty for Nick once the novelty of his presence has worn off for Simon, especially if Nick approaches his handling of him in a different way to Ruth.

I don't think Simon is particularly different with Nick other than unless Nick does not change what he is doing. But actually if he is with him he is just as happy with Nick as he is with me, as long as he does the type of things that I would do. The same applies to other people.



Simon is more sturdy and very smiley. During the past month he has started grasping objects, mouthing them and engaging with them. As he has now found his hands (and he is very fond of them) Ruth holding them to calm him is not as effective and he is now swaddled round his body but his hands are free. Simon is

kicking a lot and this causes him to change position. He does not roll and only likes to be on his tummy for brief periods. He gets frustrated in this position, although he likes being on his tummy across Ruth's knee.



Simon now enjoys sitting propped up and watching the other two. Luke will sit and talk to Simon but Millie is still very physical and she follows Luke's lead in her interactions with Simon. Simon likes to listen to Luke and to watch their physical play but he does not like it when they watch television.

His dislike for the car persists and he has shown that the pram is not meeting his needs as he does not appear to have decided if he likes to sit up or lie down. Simon is also showing a need for interaction, he is quite content to be on his own but there are times when he wants his mother's full attention. He is also showing a preference for resources that move, although he can not make them move on his own yet.

Simon is now recognising voices and making preferences for Luke and Ruth. This recognition shows in Simon's body language; when he hears their voices there is a tense reaction. As the family have recently had a lot of visiting children round Simon is showing a preference for children over adults. Ruth has noticed this at the 'messy morning' sessions,

...with children generally he seems to be a lot more expectant really aware that something more interesting is going on than when its adults sitting around talking. Probably to do with the level of volume - I would say he would be happier in a room of children doing stuff than a group of adults. At the messy morning on Friday he just sits there and loves it.

Although Simon has obviously become part of the family Ruth feels that it will be a while before they become a unit because he is still separate, the baby in many ways. Ruth feels that Simon 'fits' into the routines and demands of the rest of the family and so she has started going to baby massage and here Simon, although not reaching out to make physical contact, is showing a liking for other babies.

When I asked how she is adapting to being a mum at home, Ruth comments that this time it is different because she has the structure of a 'working day' and a diary of events because of the other two children. On the whole she is enjoying this time and is very positive.

Again during the observation I am conscious of the way in which Ruth interacts and talks to Simon. When she goes to change his nappy she can be heard talking to him, explaining what she is doing, asking him questions and leaving gaps for him to answer and respond.

January 2005

Simon has made the transition into the family unit. Although he does not eat the same foods, he now sits in his high chair for family meals. He has become an individual in other ways by asserting himself. He shouts for attention, not to be picked up but to be talked to. Luke has picked up on this signal and responds to it.

Physically there have been milestones as Simon now has two teeth and he is able to support himself briefly with his hands. He is using his legs a lot more, kicking them up into the air and playing with them. This action does give him momentum and he does go on his side, but no rolling. He reaches for toys and is grasping, not always successfully. Ruth does put Simon on his tummy, but not often because she does not like it. She feels that he is uncomfortable and does not have the visual field to see beyond the carpet in front of him and when she does put toys near him he eventually bangs his head on them.

Simon has started to blow raspberries and there is a definite development in his interaction. Ruth is good at not dominating the talking space; she gives him time to respond. As well as talk Ruth makes sounds and exaggerated facial gestures to which Simon is very responsive. In these interactions Simon is physically active, kicking his legs in excitement.



Simon is still assertive; he is happy to play on his own but once he has decided he wants company and talk he will let everyone know. Ruth says that he will be happy watching others doing things but if she is there or he catches a glimpse of her, he demands her interaction.

His personality is developing. He likes to be held and he likes to be with people.

“He is definitely one of those babies that you want to talk to more because you get a good response from him.” Simon has now started laughing and giggling.

The rest of the family are also developing their individual approaches towards Simon. Nick tends to be rougher in his play with Simon (something that Ruth is not comfortable doing) and he loves it. Luke is still verbal with him and although Millie is still very physical she loves his responses, even pulling her hair, and will tell this to other people with excitement. Millie is beginning to leave a gap but still feels that getting close will get a reaction from him. Luke can look after Simon but Ruth is

wary of Millie being too rough. The two are also now starting to compete for Simon's attention. He has arrived in the family!

Now that Ruth is home all the time she feels that Millie's transition to nursery school has been easier because she has been less anxious about this. "It is very different from if I wasn't there, I would have anxiety about how it was going to work." Another impact of being at home is being able to choose the appropriate time to support Luke with his homework, there is no rush.

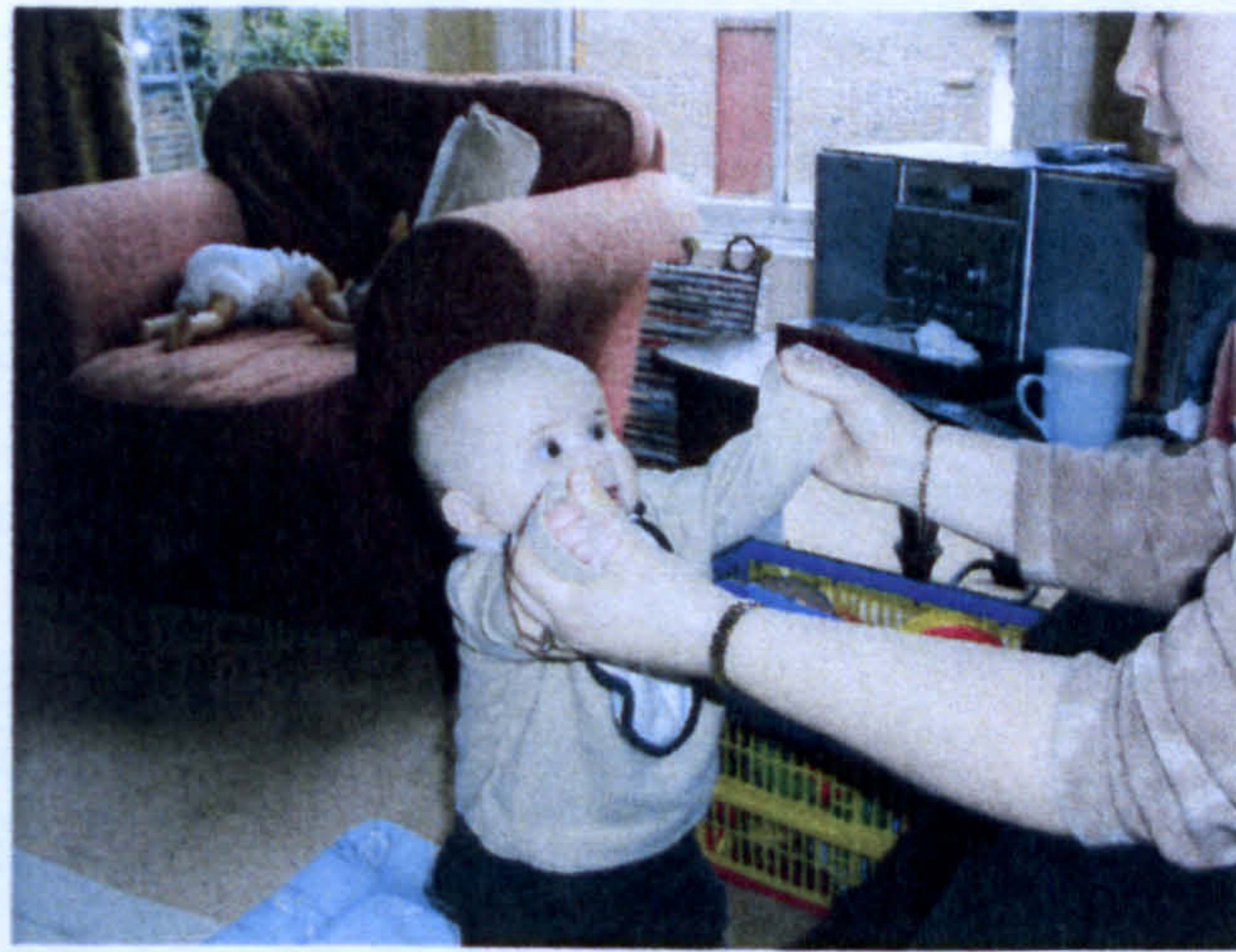
It does not become an issue whereas if I was coming in from work at 6 o'clock we would have to do it because he has bed at 7. I can actually see that he sometimes comes home from school tired he can have some down time and then do it. It also becomes part of what we do. As I am not planning to go back to work and thinking about child care for Simon is very different from the other two times. I would have been starting to think about – I would have definitely had to have something arranged by now. I just enjoy the day I'm not thinking that I have only so many weeks left or that I have to make this arrangement. Having to do things in a time frame rather than doing just what we do. I enjoy that part of it really, not always to be planning the future.

Ruth has found it hard at times to reconcile to the fact that, "... this is me now ... I have got over that this is going to be forever feeling." Her days are busy with routines but she knows that in the future she will look at her own professional development.

Simon's hatred of the car is diminishing; he is happy again in the pram and at Christmas when they went away he showed that he does not like to be unsettled and is happier in his own environment.

February 2005

Simon is now sitting up although still propped by cushions. He is much sturdier and is reaching for things. Simon is not babbling but he is screeching and he loves the sounds that he can make. He likes to take his own weight on his feet. He gets cross when he is on his front, he loves to kick and roll to the side but there is no conscious movement. He is now weaned and is showing likes and dislikes for food.



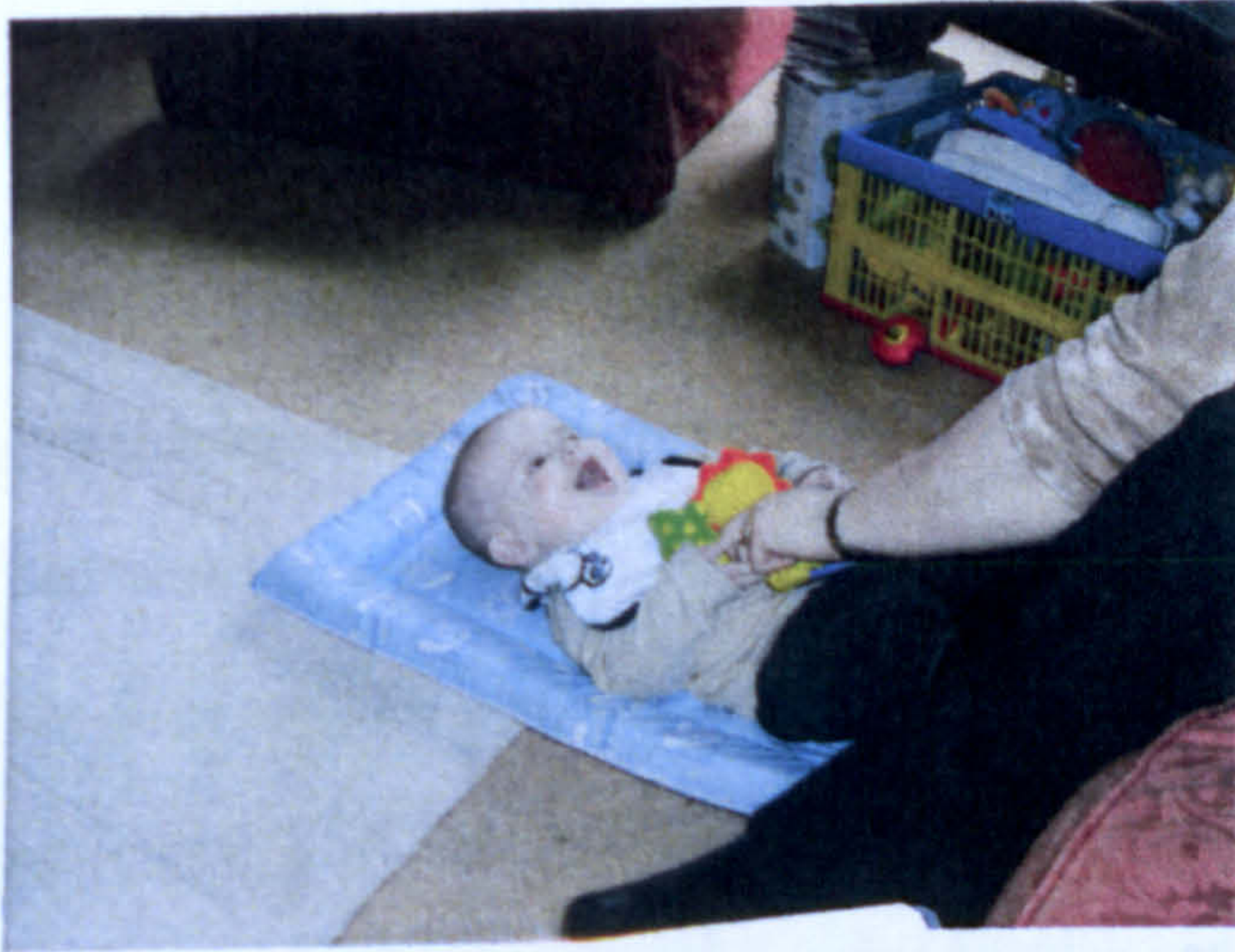
Millie does not get as close and has developed her own strategies for talking to him. She is doing a lot of clapping, which Simon responds to. Millie and Luke are less competitive for Simon's attention.

Simon is vocal and engages in conversation. He is beginning to experiment with the sounds he can make. He still enjoys his 'rough' play with Nick. He shows dislike if Nick walks past without picking him up. Ruth tells me that although she tries to do the 'rough' play with Simon, she does not get the same reaction,

Even if I do it, it hasn't got the same effect or the same strength to it – there is just something about it that I am not as rough as Nick would be. Throwing him in the air – I do it but I am probably more cagey about it and it hasn't got the same excitement factor. I do try to do it because I know that he enjoys it but he does not laugh as much as when Nick does it.

Simon and Ruth engage in an exchange of tickle anticipation and Simon responds with real laughter as he waits for the tickle to come. Millie plays this game but she can not wait for Simon to react before tickling him. Luke likes to blow on his tummy.





Simon is still mouthing. He likes rattles and Millie's shape boxes. He shows more attention when he is shown things. He likes to play peek-a-boo and holds his breath when the cover is over his face. He laughs in anticipation of the cover being removed.

Simon is still happy to watch when other children come round. On occasions in our talk with him, Simon becomes coy and shy. When Simon does start his screeching Ruth responds to him by talking with him. When you talk with Simon he is very responsive, facially and physically.

March 2005

When I was holding Simon he was not bothered when Ruth left the room. Interestingly he stared hard at me and felt my face as if mapping my features. When Ruth returned Simon did react but was quite happy to stay with me; his mother was still in sight.

Simon has made moves in his motor development. Although he still does not roll intentionally he often finds himself on his front, especially when falling into that position when he is reaching. Once on his front he does make crawling movements with his legs but he is going nowhere. It appears that as far as movement is concerned he is quite 'still'; this is evidenced as he moves very little in his sleep. He has discovered his toes and often puts them into his mouth. Simon uses a pincer like movement. Ruth says that he can pick up a really small piece of biscuit with this movement. Simon can effectively operate some of his toys now that he has this movement.

Simon's screeching has now developed into a growl. Vocally he does not imitate or make broken sounds, he just uses vowel strings. Simon is showing signs of interpreting Ruth's tones; he has been said NO to and he has signalled that he understands that this is said in a different tone. Luke is not sure that Ruth should be saying No to Simon; a protective bond. Simon also responds to happy sounds and is showing an interest in toys that make a noise. Simon likes mirrors but does not recognise himself, "It is interesting that when I look in the mirror at him, he'll smile and then he'll look at me holding him. If I talk he will associate the voice with me and not my image."

Simon laughs in response to Ruth's tickling. Simon's relationship with Millie is developing as she is more interactive with him, whereas Luke is more formal. Millie

will play alongside Simon because she is of an age where the toys still hold an interest.

Simon is given the treasure basket to play with for the first time. He studies the basket and there is a change in his activity. His breathing and his arm movements are much more defined. He does not like the touch of the loofah fish – the touch puts him off. He reaches into the basket and he begins to engage with a wide range of the resources – the scarf, the spoons which he returns to again and again, the shells and the brushes. He holds them up and really explores and investigates them. He is absorbed and is rarely distracted other than when he hits himself on the head – this resource is removed. Ruth comments on the pace with which he is touching the things in the basket. Simon's involvement with the treasure basket is in line with the findings of Goldschmied and Jackson (2004, p.98) when they observe,

It is striking to observe how the whole body is involved ... they respond in a lively way to the stimulus and excitement that the involvement with the chosen object induces.



During the treasure basket observation I used the Leuven Involvement Scale as adapted for young children by Forbes (2004, p.82 & 83). The Leuven Involvement Scale was developed by Ferre Laevers (Laevers et al, 1997) as a means of observing children's involvement in their play. These scales show that when a child is

involved in his/her play there is a deeper level of emotional well-being which in turn enhances a child's development. When looking at the child involvement signals Simon is concentrating, there is a definite increase in the effort that he is putting into this play. Simon is definitely persisting, he sustains the play for 20 minutes with few episodes of distraction, only when he bumps himself and then he is quickly reassured and soon returns to his play. Simon is satisfied with this play. When looking at the table I would say that Simon is between level 4 and 5.

Table 5.1 Forbes (2004, p.82 & 83)

Level 1 Very little activity	Baby appears listless, activity is repetitive & passive, not challenging. Baby may appear to be 'staring into space' or thinking deeply - use the involvement signs to judge this
Level 2 Activity often interrupted	Only 50% of the observed time will result in activity. Moments of 'staring into space' & not concentrating. Interruptions/distractions detract from baby returning to activity. More interested in what is going on in room/surroundings than at basket
Level 3 Mainly continuous activity	Baby busy but not intensely concentrating & still easily distracted. Facial expressions determine level of mental energy, concentration is at low level.
Level 4 Activity with more intense moments	Baby concentrating more deeply, even after distraction/interruption returns to activity. Baby really involved in activity, talking to self, perhaps sharing pleasure with nearby adults. Able to identify more of the involvement signals.
Level 5 High involvement in activity	Baby deeply involved in activity. Most of the involvement signals observed. Must show 'concentration, creativity, energy, persistence & complexity'

May 2005

On the last visit I asked Ruth to continue to use the Involvement Scales when Simon was playing with the treasure basket. The following are the notes that she made.

Table 5.2 Timetable of Simon's involvement with the treasure basket

Date	Length of play	Levels – Involvement Scales
28/3/05	10 minutes	Level 4: 8 minutes reducing to levels 3/2 at the end
30/3/05	15 minutes	Level 4/5: 10 minutes Level 3/2: 5 minutes – wanted bottle
2/4/05	10 minutes	Level 4/5 : 8 minutes Level 3: 1 minute Level 2: 1 minute
4/4/05	5 minutes	Level 4
9/4/05	10 minutes	Level 4: 7 minutes Level 3: 2 minutes Level 1: 1 minute
13/4/05	12 minutes	Level 4/5: 8 minutes Level 3: 4 minutes
17/4/05	6 minutes	Level 4: 5 minutes Level 3: 1 minute
19/4/05	10 minutes	Level 4/5: 7 minutes Level 3: 3 minutes
24/4/05	9 minutes	Level 4: 4 minutes Level 3: 4 minutes Level 2: 1 minute
28/4/05	10 minutes	Level 5: 5 minutes Level 4: 2 minutes Level 3: 3 minutes
1/5/05	5 minutes	Level 3: 4 minutes Level 2: 1 minute – needed a sleep
Levels of involvement were affected by the following:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity • Presence of siblings • Physical state – feed/sleep 		

The treasure basket is presented to Simon again and as there has been a gap since it was last out, Simon is again excited by it. He has favourites in the basket; the mirror, banging the rings together, the wooden and the woven objects. He likes the scarf over his face but he will not do this for himself. An interesting outcome of the treasure basket play is that Ruth has decided to introduce Simon to his other toys as she did with the treasure basket and also to rotate them to break the familiarity

cycle. Ruth likes the basket because Simon is able to use the resources differently with each other on different occasions.

Simon has decided to babble; he did this on the morning of his eight month check up when Ruth was going to mention it to the health visitor. Now there are dada's all over the place and all sorts of different noises. When Simon bangs things together he is very expressive in his vocalisations. He makes dada noises but no mama sounds. Saying NO to him now will stop him in his tracks.

Simon is now steady when sitting and reaching for things. He is moving but again by accident and not intent. He has the right stance to crawl but he always gets one leg stuck underneath his body. Simon has met other babies and if one is sitting next to him he will reach out to grab, he only likes it when he is in control of the contact. He is not possessive about his toys when Millie takes them away.

Simon gets upset when he hears anyone crying properly. He does get excited by going to the front door and there are games which Millie plays with him when he really laughs. He loves to be tickled. Sometimes Luke and Millie see Simon as an add on to the family as there are things they can both do that Simon can not; but Simon is now a part of what the family does. Simon's and Ruth's interactions are full of fun.

Simon's pincer movement is still present and he is now picking up small things. He loves the remote control and he presses the buttons precisely.

June 2005

Outside in the sunshine and sitting on the grass. Simon explores the grass, pulls out the blades and holds them up for inspection. Simon is looking different, more a little boy than a baby. He is crawling properly. When he was on holiday the stone floor put him off as he had a few knocks but on returning home he is crawling on all fours. He does not venture too far, seeing the room as a natural boundary.

Simon flew for the first time and he was not bothered by it. On holiday he established a morning visit to the shops with his grandfather.

He went down to the shop with him every morning – to the extent where he began to expect things so that when they went to the shop and Nick's dad was buying the bread and the croissants he was looking round as if to say I normally have one of these on the way home and you haven't given me any yet!! He quite got into the routine by the end of it.

On holiday Simon had German measles. All of the children got on well when they were away.

As Simon plays with the treasure basket he is babbling contentedly to himself. He is quite happy to play on his own but he does look up to see whether we are paying attention to him. Although crawling Simon has not moved on to pulling himself up on the furniture, although he does like to stand against the couch when placed there. Simon is using his index finger all of the time.

– he has started using his index finger all of the time for everything, for touching things and when he has a car he does the wheels and (Ruth goes to get a car and gives it to Simon. He does not do it straight away but he does after a few seconds, pushing the wheels round with his index finger, looking very closely at the effect that this action has on the wheels) he does that with everything whether its big or small wheel – like Millie’s buggy if it is upside down he will sit and push the wheel (*I ask if Ruth thinks this is schematic*). In terms of – there are three things which I have seen him do it with. He does it with any car he gets hold of, with Millie’s buggy and he also does it with a sit-on toy car upstairs and he does it with that as well. He does seem to generalise it across anything that he can do that with he will do that. He is definitely using his index finger when he is touching something new he will touch it with his finger.

Simon is now imitating as seen when he and Ruth nod their heads alternately. He is also imitating his vocalisations and is interested in the sounds that he can make. He understands NO and can get upset; if it is said three times there are real tears. The index finger play is affecting the preferences that Simon has for toys.

The remote control is to die for... he will do his longest crawling to get to the game control and then when you take it off him he is absolutely distraught whereas with other things he is not that bothered.

Whether it is because it is Luke that is using the game control or the movement on the buttons it is hard to say. He loves the holes in my wrist watch and pushes his index finger into them. Simon loves books and when reading with Ruth you can see his eyes following the pictures, he indicates when he wants the page turning; he closes the book at the end and then goes back to the beginning to start again.



Ruth is still enjoying her time at home, possibly because it is not all focused on Simon. She feels that this was a good decision,

It means I can enjoy all 3 of them. I am able to give them enough time but not too much time. The result being that I am busy all the time, not that I am looking for things to get worried about, because that is what I tend to do if I have got too much free time – think about the little stuff which then becomes big stuff. I don't feel guilty that I am not giving them enough time, spoiling them or that I am being bound with nothing to do. When I was working I was tending to use my days off doing stuff that I can now do when they are in school, so that when they are home I can spend more time with them.

Simon is now a conversationalist, as you can see that he responds to talk in the appropriate place. There is intonation in his responses, he laughs and he blows bubbles. In a game of peek-a-boo Simon is very responsive. Simon pulls Ruth to him and kisses her.



July 2005

Simon is now a confident crawler and is showing an interest in being on his legs more. He is more confident and still persists in using his fingers all of the time and as a consequence his fine motor skills are well developed. He turns the individual pages of a book.

His vocalisations now have a purpose; he has realised that there is a reason for them. He makes noises in patterns and he obviously plans them as he uses them in blocks and he changes after a period of a few days to a new pattern. He makes choices, usually a ball and with his increased confidence it means that he can chase

the other two children. His favourite is still books. Simon finds it hard that he is not involved in the turning of pages when Luke is doing his reading homework.

Simon has now got his own game control because he broke Luke's. He likes to, "... sit next to Luke just doing the buttons – which is outrageous to think an 11 month old is able to manipulate a Game Boy. He investigates all of the buttons."



When Simon shares a book with his mother he is really excited, he points at pictures and makes appropriate animal sounds. He also imitates the noises that Ruth makes. When he shares a book with me he is equally content, he looks at the book and at me and he turns the pages.

When he goes to bed Simon waves and blows kisses. Ruth is happy and looking forward to the school holidays. She enjoys the way in which little things are always changing. Simon is definitely more aware of others. He has never shown a fear of

strangers and Ruth comments that, "... perhaps Simon has an in built security because he is in his own home. Because he knows that I am there all the time."

When Ruth reflects on all three of her children it is apparent that they all have a different make up. Luke is logical and likes the design of things and the planning involved in activities. Millie is more physical and creative, she loves gymnastics and she is very strong. When they are with Simon their different characters show in how they interact.

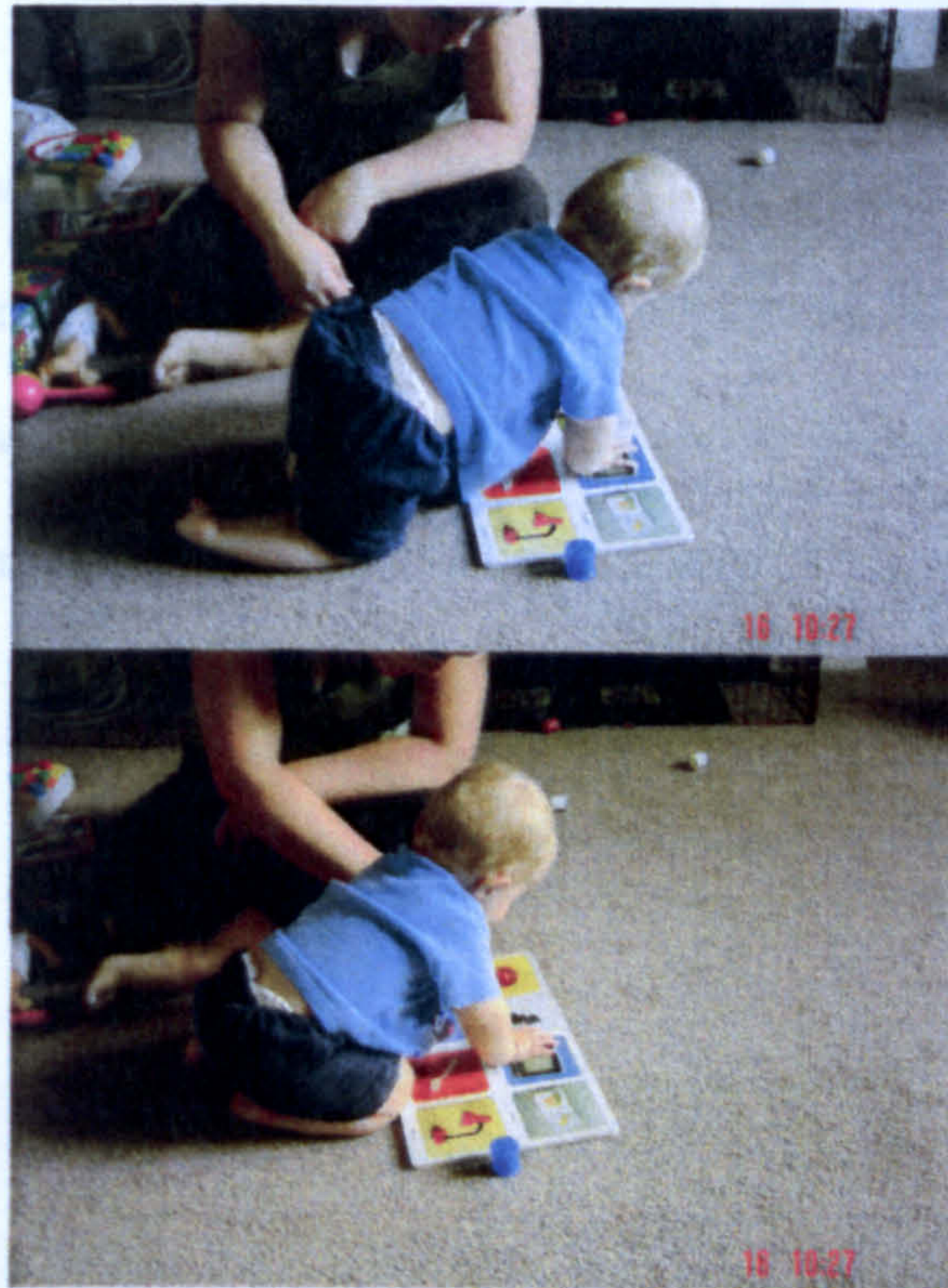
Millie still mauls him and he loves it now – she was dragging him backwards away from the steps and he was laughing his head off and they established a game. Whereas Luke will worry about the consequences. Luke will sit and look at a book with him and there is a difference in the way that they play with him – Millie is much more physical. Luke likes people to be in the room with him when on the game station and he loves it when Simon sits with him.

August 2005

Simon is now one year old. His crawling skills mean that he is negotiating the deep kitchen steps and other areas of the house. Simon's excitement about anything is apparent in his facial expressions. He sustains a ball game with Millie and shows that he understands the concept of waiting his turn. Now that he is crawling he can chase after Millie which develops into some very physical play, which Simon obviously enjoys.

Simon still loves his books and frequently goes to look at them. When Ruth shares books with him his excitement increases and the reading of the books moves onto another level for him. Before engaging with any resources Simon really studies.

Simon is much more vocal and uses facial expression when 'talking'. Simon is pulling himself up more. He is starting to respond to questions and enjoys making animal noises.



Apart from books Simon likes water. Ruth has done gloop play with all of the children and Simon really enjoyed it. Ruth comments that books are the only things that Simon will revisit during a period of time. Simon is also making positive choices about the people he likes. If grandma, grandpa or Nick goes past without picking him up he gets very cross. Simon is showing signs of representational play by pretending to brush his hair and teeth.

Ruth comments that she has become aware of the fact that Simon spends long periods of the day in the buggy and that after all the walking and sleeping there is

possibly only two hours of 1:1 interaction. When Simon and Millie play there is a lot of laughter, especially when Millie hides and Simon has to look for her.

October 2005

I have not seen Simon for nearly two months and he has made the change from baby to little boy. He is more assertive and a part of what is going on. Simon's good fine motor skills show when he takes the pen off Ruth and imitates her actions by writing on the paper. Ruth comments that he likes to copy.



Simon is now saying recognisable words in the right context. When he sees a picture of *Bob the Builder* Simon sings the song with rhythmic intonation. Simon's early vocalisations are interesting, especially as he did very little babbling. "He has

gone straight from focused communication straight to words and he really pays attention when you say, HELLO, he really forms the sounds as he watches you.”

Having recognisable words at this age is unusual. Ruth wonders if the words are more recognisable as Simon does not babble and so they clearly stand out. Simon is still doing lots of symbolic noises and is also beginning to sing along with repeated tunes, *'The Road to Amarillo'*. When Ruth plays with Simon she naturally role models language for him and is positive in her praise of his efforts.

Simon is still showing no signs of walking although he does scoot round the furniture more and is starting to stand independently. He is safe when coming down the stairs; he turns round and reverses to the edge. He repeats this action when going through a doorway in a strange house.

Simon's social diary is expanding; a weekly mother and toddler group and a crèche whilst Ruth goes swimming and at church. If he is unsettled to start with he soon settles if someone shares a book with him. Simon is getting territorial about Ruth and Nick when Luke and Millie are about.

Simon likes cause and effect resources (like my camera) and when he and Ruth play with his camera there is a closeness in their play. When he is with her Simon makes good eye contact and is obviously stimulated by the responses that he gets from her.

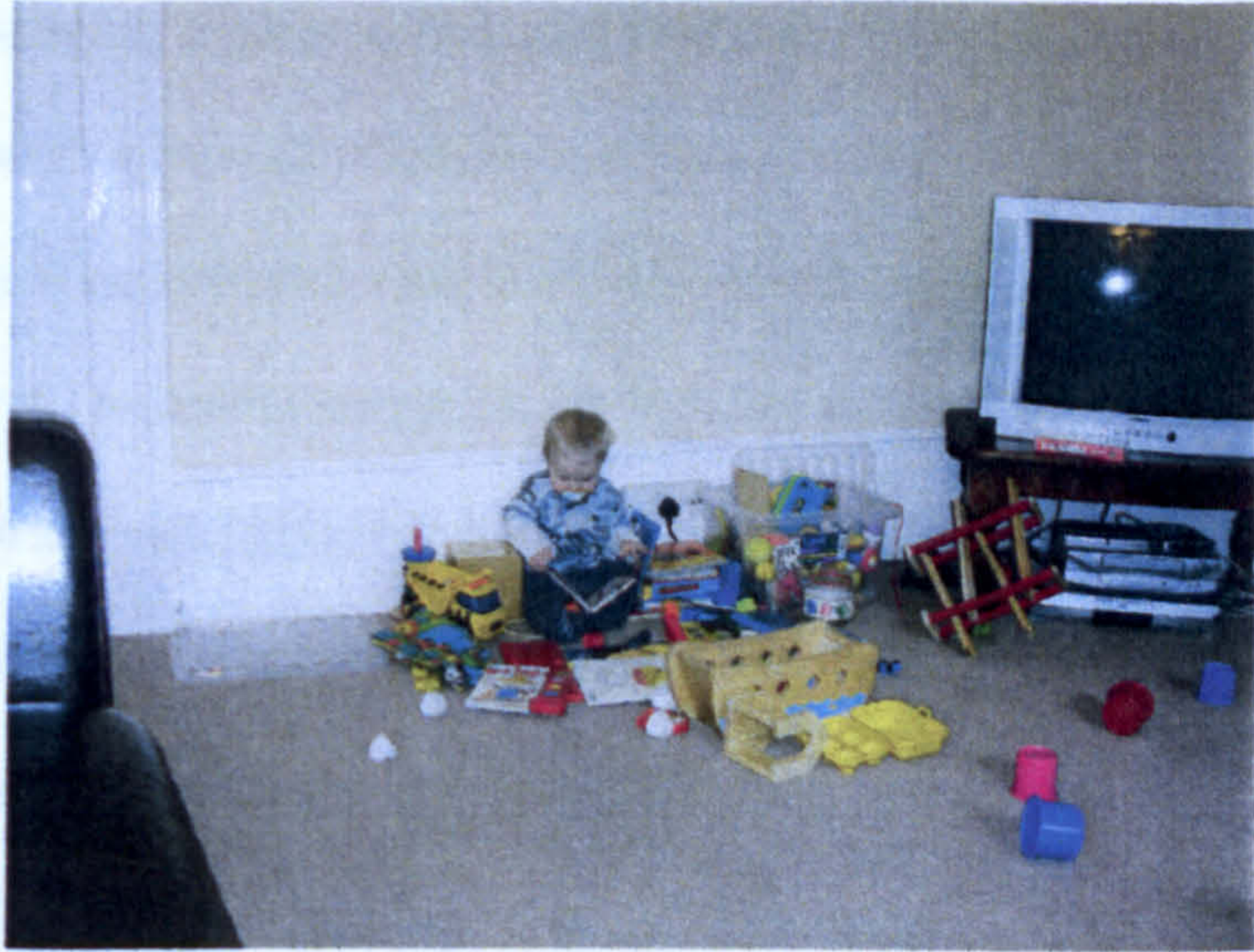
When they play catch with the ball Simon completes Ruth's 'Ready, steady... GO' and holds his hands out to catch.

Simon has become fascinated by the whirring of the tape recorder, so I show him how to open and close the door; once demonstrated Simon can do it.

November 2005

Simon's personality is developing. He is confident; he investigates and studies me before bringing a book and sitting on my knee. He indicates that he wants to sit beside me, is this because the fascinating tape recorder and camera are nearby.

Simon is still not walking and Ruth comments that some of this is due to the others doing things for him. Millie demonstrates this by picking Simon up and moving him. Millie is evidently desperate for him to walk and thinks that if she carries him from behind and he uses his feet that he will walk. He has been standing for weeks now and actively chooses to do so but he will not put one foot in front of the other. Ruth is fascinated that walking is not part of Simon's agenda. Simon loves corners.



Simon has more words (down, gone, more). He is throwing himself dramatically on the floor and there is a distinction between a whinge and absolute despair. He has developed a backward kick to clear others away. Ruth talks about the contrast between Simon's language and his gross motor development. She feels that moving is not important to Simon as he was always quite happy to sit.



Ruth says that being at home with Simon makes her feel as if she knows him better. She recognises that because of the demands of the other two children at the end of the day that it is important that she has 1:1 time with Simon. Simon gets his social interaction at the moment through his siblings and he has been influenced by them. This shows when Ruth helps in the crèche at church. First time mothers have to do things for other children whilst still with their own babies whereas Simon is self contained and has an ability to get on and do.

Simon has now added a family photograph album to his collection of books.

Simon helps me turn off the tape recorder, is this now a routine?

December 2005

Simon is walking and this has given him a whole new appearance. He does not like walking outside but is confident in the house and will explore.

His language is now being supported by facial expression and gesture; "...laughing with his hand over his mouth ... In the buggy there are lots of 'Oh no's!' so he will drop something on purpose to be able to say it." When praised by Ruth, Simon's face lights up in response. He is outgoing and social and he has started symbolic play with things like the tea set. He initiates and sustains his own play. When Ruth does some action rhymes with Simon I can see that he is predicting what is coming next. Simon is secure and Ruth is pleased because this is what she hoped would

happen if she stayed at home. Simon approaches me a lot more, is this because Ruth is there and he feels secure or is it because of the tape recorder and the camera. I let him have the camera and he is fascinated by the buttons and switches.

I need to note that I think there is a difference here with all of the children that I observe within the nurseries, they acknowledge my presence but they are never as familiar with me as Simon is, is this because I am on his territory? That I have been visiting since he was born? Is it that he is more secure and that with Ruth present he sees no danger? I think this gives a difference to Simon's levels of play; his skills are really developing as he is now using resources in an imaginary way. Also is there a difference in the social interaction because he has Luke and Millie to play with? I see this type of play at one of the case study nurseries when M... is the adult involved; this then says something about the level and quality of the adult interaction which also means that there is a secure attachment.

Simon again concludes the visit by switching off the tape recorder.

January 2006

Mobility has opened up a new world for Simon. He greets me at the door when I arrive and appears to be excited to see me. He is quite happy to play with me without Ruth. He brings me a variety of toys and there is an obvious interest in cause and effect resources. He signals that he wants to sit on my knee and read a

book; he turns the pages, points to pictures and vocalises. There is a definite urge to communicate.

When he plays with the dolls he gets a bowl and spoon to feed them. He likes to play with Luke's action figures because of their cause and effect nature. Once again the camera is on his agenda and he helps me to take photographs of Ruth. He asks me to brush his hair; he really likes this, he looks at himself in the mirror and gives himself a kiss.

Simon is extending his vocabulary. He looks as if he sometimes signs; he likes a particular television programme where the man is signing. He still enjoys writing. Simon does imitate but not straight away. With words he does not repeat them at once but you hear him using them a few days later.

Simon is really confident in his mobility and likes to climb; frequently he has been 'air lifted' by Millie. He still likes corners. Simon is still attracted by the tape recorder and is delighted when I let him operate it.

Ruth talks about the feminine work/life balance in that when she was working childcare was seen as her responsibility and that men appear to be able to plan their lives without having to make arrangements for the children first as it is somehow assumed that unless the mother has made definite plans for that time the father can suit himself as to what he does and when, because he does not have to ask for

anyone to look after the children. It was discussed that perhaps this was the same when it came to the allocation of the work within the house. Ruth said that she felt that this was the same whether she was working or not.

Ruth feels that Simon's interaction, speech and gesture is more advanced than the others and that this is because during the day she knows which pages of books he likes the best so she can go back and reinforce language in that way. Also that some of the things that she does naturally with Simon she sees other parents copying; these are the things that she knows about from her work. We discuss that this level of interaction cannot occur within the nurseries because that knowledge of the child as an individual is missing.

Simon has an aura of security about him especially in his reactions to me, is this solely because I am visiting him in his environment with his mother present? Ruth reflects on the other two children who did have out of the home care and that this did have an impact on their communication skills because of the level and intimacy of the interactions.

February 2006

Simon has been ill for about three weeks and this has affected his rate of development, which is slowly being built back to its previous level. His routine has gone over this time and it is a struggle to return him to his sleep and eating routines.

He is trying to run in a leisurely way. His language usage is broader and he is now using descriptive words like dirty and stringing two words together.

If he points to something now and says biscuit I would then extend it by saying biscuits are in the kitchen rather than echoing back a word I know that he knows. I know what he knows – I don't think there is any point in getting him to say a word like that because if he isn't motivated to say it then there is no point.

Simon is again showing modelling patterns of behaviour as he likes to watch videos but his choices are influenced by the preferences of the family. He will watch videos out of his experience if he knows that Luke, Millie and Nick really enjoy them. Simon's fine motor skills are in evidence when he holds a pen; he has the correct grip when writing on the paper. Is this more luck than skill or is this because again this behaviour has been modelled for him? It would appear so as he wants to do this when others are writing. Is it again the influences of being the youngest of three children and is therefore able to access a wider range of writing tools than he would have done if he had been an only child? He writes with pens and pencils whereas children of this age are traditionally given chunky writing tools.

Simon has also begun
spatial awareness. We
Ruth's knee, this is
because they cannot



with growing
the position on
the floor



is working off the tape recorder.

Simon has also begun to show an interest in jigsaws and demonstrates his growing spatial awareness. When wanting to read a story Simon reverses into position on Ruth's knee; this is his preferred way of reading but for Ruth this causes a problem because she cannot engage with his face and make eye contact.



Simon is getting territorial with children his own age and so Ruth is going to try another toddler group with him so that he has more contact with other children. Ruth feels that he needs to toughen up whilst she is with him so that he will be fine when he goes to playgroup. This is important because of his August birthday; he could potentially be going to nursery school a month after his third birthday. Simon can now show selective deafness if he has his own agenda.

He has developed selective deafness – if he has his own agenda he will follow it. He is not as compliant as he was. When Nick and I took him out for lunch there were small stones in a tree and he put his hands in and as he saw me approaching he had his last chance and he grabbed a handful and he chucked it all – it was now or never.

Simon again closes by turning off the tape recorder.

March 2006

This was the day after Ruth did some training for me and she left Simon with his grandparents. The separation was not easy for Simon and he remembered it the next day when Ruth went outside for something when Nick returned from work. An association that when someone comes in Ruth might be leaving again.

Simon is an assertive little boy now. His play has changed in that it is sustained and there is a purpose to it. He is showing a preference for gender stereotypical toys (cars and trains), which his older brother was never interested in. When playing with these toys he makes the appropriate brm, brm sounds; Ruth does not recall modelling this language for him. Simon came across the cars at his grandparents and made his preference known. Ruth would have thought them too old for him. “We almost have to have everything out because he is interested in things that I would have thought were too old for him.” This is emphasized when Simon brings me the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* to share with him

Simon’s language is broader, about 90 words used consistently and clearly. He is joining two words together. This is a lot of language for a 19 month old, this is different to his siblings’ language development.

I still think it has a lot to do with his personality and his choices – in terms of his, because he walked later and he was so interested in looking at books his social language had to be more favourite. Perhaps I maintained his attention with books by looking at them with him rather than the others because they didn’t choose it so often and also because they were walking and doing other things.

Simon has experienced snow and he loved it.

At playgroup Simon goes off on his own and tries to interact with the other children but not in a play sort of way but in a study type of way with his hands on his hips and bending down. "As if trying to attract their attention and trying to get them to look at him – he does interact in the sense that he will smile and laugh at the same things." Simon is also more involved in the play of his siblings. With Millie Simon kicks the ball and then plays a chasing game of hide and surprise between the hallway and the two rooms.

Ruth has placed a chalk board between the kitchen and the lounge,

That has been great as he will just go by that and write on it all the time. Because it is there and it is out – I counted the other day and he went to it about 15 times – as he goes past it he will pick up the chalk and use it. It's that bit about getting things out and them not using it so you think they don't like it but it's just perhaps because it isn't there



When reflecting on Simon's social skills Ruth feels that the time she has spent with him means that he gets more consistency, "I can offer Simon consistency across seven days that allows him then to have more experience of the same things therefore with those things he gets there quicker." Ruth acknowledges that the other two had experiences that Simon has not had; social interaction, outdoor play and exposure to a wider range of experiences and resources. She does feel, however, that, "It is the knowledge that I have about him that makes the difference." Simon is also exposed to older children who role model for him; he gets a book to lean on when he writes and Ruth wonders, "... whether he will need to go back and go through the process because he could have missed out the problem solving process."

Simon concludes the observation by turning the recorder off.

April 2006

Simon greets me with smiles and a mischievous expression. The older children are on holiday. Simon and Ruth have both been ill for ten days. Simon's language went down and his feeding and sleeping needs were affected.

Simon is instigating play. He does not stay with us for long; he moves from room to room engaging with the other children. Luke and Millie are both more tolerant of Simon than they are of each other. Millie and Simon play well together and are soon going to share a bedroom.

Simon is having more tantrums; throwing himself on the floor and head butting people and objects. The family leave him to get on with this and when he feels 'sorted' he resumes his usual happy disposition. Simon enjoys the rough and tumble play of Luke and Millie.

Simon poses for photographs and is then interested at looking at them in the viewer. He also becomes engrossed by seeing his own reflection in the viewer when the pictures have gone. He loves to press the buttons on the camera.

Ruth talks about Simon's dummy use which she is trying to reduce,

He actually talks round it – he would be the classic case of front speech problems if he had it all of the time – he holds it in his teeth and talks round it. That was when I realised that it wasn't ideal because if he is happy enough to talk then he does not need it. If I tell him to take his dummy out he will take it out. He just needs something to calm him

Simon is using language and phrases that he has overheard such as, 'Stop it!' and also 'Please' and 'Thank you.' So much so that now he seems unable to say 'yes' without the please or thank you. Simon is a real player now. Again he concludes the observation.

May 2006

Simon greets me excitedly and as it is a nice day we go outside. This is his territory and he gives me a tour of his estate, showing me the play house, the trees, the climbing frame, the swings and the trampoline. After the tour Simon settles down to play with the water in two washing up bowls. He shows good levels of involvement as he fills and pours into and out of the bottles.



Since my last visit
evidently relished
long periods of time
and he now appears
Steven's gross motor
onto a chair to have
in other areas such
garden steps, which
I think that is the way
for me personally
older sister probably
element of challenge
Children under the
this visit it is obvious
share with his sister
He is getting
wants he has
one bowl of

to the beach. He
with potatoes but
for ice cream
which he enjoys
later in the evening
tasting of the
resources that are
the opportunity
We wouldn't have
of staff
likely to be
what they can
make his garden
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that would be
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Since my last visit the family have been to Wales and Simon went on the beach. He evidently relished the experience and would enjoy filling buckets with pebbles for long periods of time. This experience has also given him a passion for ice creams and he now associates them with being outside.

Simon's gross motor development shows in the confident way in which he climbs onto a chair to have something to eat. Ruth explains that this confidence is showing in other areas such as the balancing beams at school and the negotiating of the garden steps, which he reverses down.

Ruth and I have a discussion about the access that Simon has to resources that are intended for older children. I ask Ruth if she would have given Luke the opportunity to play on the outdoor equipment that Simon uses. "No not at all. We wouldn't have had it because it is not age appropriate ... Even now Luke is less confident of stuff. I think that is the way we have dealt with him." This was an interesting discussion for me personally as my youngest daughter is more physically confident than her older sister probably because she had access to resources and equipment that had an element of challenge within them.

Children under the age of three are often said not to be able to share and yet during this visit it is obvious that with the minimum of encouragement Simon is willing to share with his sister although as Ruth comments this is not always the case,

He is getting a bit more territorial about things but if he gets the thing that he wants he tends to be ok – he will tolerate her being there. If there was only one bowl of water it might be a different matter. They play well and it is

getting better because he now wants to do what she is doing and he is following her and she is able to help him.

The play of the two children is interesting especially when Millie starts to water the flowers with the watering can. Simon follows her and then starts to copy her play. Millie takes on a leader role as she supports him when he has difficulties in refilling the watering can but Simon shows that he can solve the problem on his own; instead of submerging the can Simon uses one of the bottles to fill the can.



Simon and Millie play well together and Ruth puts this down to their closeness in age.

She is a good role model. Because she is more interested in the same things as Simon – she plays at Simon’s level where Simon can do some of it – it is always something new for him.

This could pose a problem for Simon and Ruth when Millie starts full time school in September. Ruth is already aware of this and has considered spending time in mother and toddler groups before Simon starts Playgroup in January 2007. She feels that Simon will need to have the experience of being in a group situation where he can socialise with children of his own age.

Simon’s language is developing as he now says lots of two word phrases. As his language is developing Simon is proving to be more malleable as he can be reasoned with. When he hears a dog barking he says, “Doggie”, which prompts a conversation about Simon and animals. He loves a wide range of farm animals and is not perturbed by them.

Simon is beginning to take part in more role play especially when this is instigated by Millie. As usual Simon concludes the observation by going off with Millie on to the climbing frame.

June 2006

Another visit when the weather is good and the children are playing out in the garden. Simon acknowledges my arrival momentarily as he continues to play in the paddling pool. Throughout the visit it is clear that Simon’s language skills are developing. He has a lolly and comes to sit with us at the table and engages me in talk about his lolly.



Simon is repeating words that are said to him and then storing them until he recalls them to use in the appropriate place. He can now follow a sequence of phrases so that Ruth can reason with him and help to understand that after this, that will follow. He is using language such as hot and cold, heavy and too big. Ruth is not sure if he understands the actual concepts but that he is beginning to make associations. As Ruth was a speech therapist I am interested in her professional opinion of Simon's language development and ask if it is unusual,

What he couldn't do is the standard test of, show me the big one/little one. But he has the early accurate and relevant association of the words which he just seems to pick things up because of his exposure – the other two and the things that we do together.

As his language is developing Simon is now more assertive, especially with the other two children. His relationship with Millie is still very strong and his relationship with Luke has moved on as Luke can now play football with him now that he has better control and coordination. When he is playing with Millie he appears to be more content. They do not necessarily play together, more side by side. Ruth comments that if Millie comes into the house he will follow shortly as he does not like to be on his own.



Simon's relationships with other children outside of the family is something which Ruth is giving close thought to as she feels that he needs to socialise with other children. He is now more assertive with Millie. Ruth is going to build up his social experiences throughout the year prior to starting school in September 2007.

Although Simon has had limited association with other children his time spent at home with Ruth has made him very secure and she foresees no issues when he does start at playgroup other than the socialisation issues.

The whole social thing being in the group situation – how he will manage with that. I think he will manage all right but whether he will behave appropriately, within adult expectations ... perfectly capable of doing things that they will give him and he plays alongside really well but I haven't seen him in a large group of his own age. It is quite a big playgroup, probably 20-25. He will be fine; almost overly confident, secure in what he wants, he won't be a retiring sit on the edge child. Sometimes when a child comes to play alongside he will lift his leg – he still does that. He does sometimes hit out although it is appropriate for his age.

As Ruth reflects on the implications for Simon when he starts playgroup I wonder what her reflections are about the time she has spent at home with him,

I am having to adjust to the fact the he is asserting himself and it is not just a case of letting him get on as he would when he was little. I think the last couple of months I have found it is more an adjustment of my expectations – harder work – it is now 3 of them but Luke is getting easier. There has been an air of adjustment. I think it is different than with the other 2 – because I was working, whether I was less aware – I relied on our routines – in nursery I was not responsible – but today we have to have a routine for the other 2. Taking Luke to football now is getting more and more difficult because he does not want to sit and wait for an hour. Before he could crawl off but now he gets fed up which alters the dynamics of the whole thing.

When asked to elaborate on her feelings in more depth Ruth was very candid in her response,

It is interesting. Up until this point everything was quite planned because I knew what I was doing. But when he gets to play group what I am going to do? Do I do more things at school or do I get myself more time to myself? I am almost scared of being at home with nothing to do because I don't want to get used to that if I am going to go back to work. I am nervous about September because I will have a whole day ahead of me and I will have to actively work at that or else he will lose out. I have to enjoy the time that I have got. It is going to be different and I hope I will enjoy that time with him. We have been talking about the possibility of me going back to work in a couple of years it is weighing up the implications that that is going to have on family. I am not anticipating going back into a full time job but I would like something for a couple of days.

Ruth goes on in more detail about her reflections on some of the choices that she has made in regard to childcare for her three children and what these choices have meant for all of them,

I am not very maternal – I am not all over them – I love them to bits and I love spending time with them but I have my boundaries and I wonder whether that helps because I never felt their going to nursery as my loss and therefore I had no anxiety – I look at it as an advantage for them and for me. When Luke changed from a Childminder to a day nursery he did get upset and that did upset me. I don't worry because I feel that I have a real life approach – if it is right for me it is right for them – me being at home and not wanting to would have been worse for them. I don't think there is a right way across the board. It is not the same for all children and families. You can analyse it too much.

July 2006

Simon is pleased to see me and he comes over with his sandals and initiates a conversation with me. He goes to get a toy brush and he brushes my hair. He goes to play next to Millie. When he starts to transport resources to behind the settee he is talking to himself; he is telling a story and that is why he is moving the toys. Another of his schema's appears to be enclosing as he frequently carries a bag which he puts things into. When he goes shopping he has to have his own bag and when he gets to the cash point he has to pay. Simon's play has now moved onto another level. His language has developed so that he is saying two and three strings. His language is so secure that when something will not work for him he takes it to Ruth and is able to tell her what he wants her to do and how to do it.

Simon shows in his play that he can concentrate and persevere. This is apparent when he reverts to one of his persistent play patterns; pushing buttons.

Simon's character is taking shape as he is assertive and has learned to say, no, in a manner which indicates that he is not pleased. His play with his brother and sister has also changed in that he is much more physical with them and can hit and pull hair; the other two are very patient with him. This play has not affected his relationship with them as can be seen when Simon and Millie are sitting side by side in the sand pit. Simon's obsession when playing with sand is to mix it with water. He fills a hole in a toy tower and then bends down to look under the tray to see it

drop through to the grass. He shows high levels of concentration when he is involved in this play.



This play is returned to later on in this observation and again Simon shows high levels of concentration, even when Millie is not there to help to extend his play.



September 2006

As the photographs illustrate Simon and Millie play cooperatively and although on occasions Simon says no to Millie's play suggestions he soon follows to join in with her play. This was seen when she goes off to play on the trampoline and Simon after declining her invitation to join her, soon follows her and throws himself into enjoying this new toy. When he first gets on the trampoline he is tentative until he has worked out a strategy to balance himself. When he has done this he enjoys Millie bouncing which causes him to bounce and fall over. Again this is a toy that offers challenge for Simon and would not have been a resource for a child of his age; it gives him the opportunity to imitate the more developed play of Millie. When she does a somersault Simon is fascinated and has a go. His attempt fails but he obviously enjoys the *challenge*.



Unlike the experiences of many young children in day care settings Simon is learning his colours through his life experiences and not by being continuously asked to name the colours of objects. The experience that Simon is learning through is ice pops and when he tells me the colours of the flowers that he is watering it is apparent that this is learning that has been consolidated.

September 2006

Since the last visit Simon has had his second birthday and Ruth comments that there has been a distinct change in his behaviour. He is more assertive about what he wants and if things are not done as he wants then there are problems. Simon gives a demonstration of an assertive and very emphatic, 'NO!'

It is interesting because it is so different to how he was. Previously he was pleased to have had any attention but now he is quite demanding in what sort of attention he has. Ruth comments that this is fine but that they are realising it is having an effect on what everyone else wants to do. They are trying to erase some of it as well as trying to make sure that he does get some quality time. This behaviour has

developed over the summer holidays as he has gone and got on with whatever Luke and Millie are doing.

When reflecting on the changes in Simon and how this occurred over the summer holiday period she makes the following comments. Her references to the differences of how a lower level of interaction on her part has had a dramatic impact on Simon's play are of particular interest. This illustrates the importance of having the interaction of a knowledgeable adult to move a child's learning forward, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is clearly described.

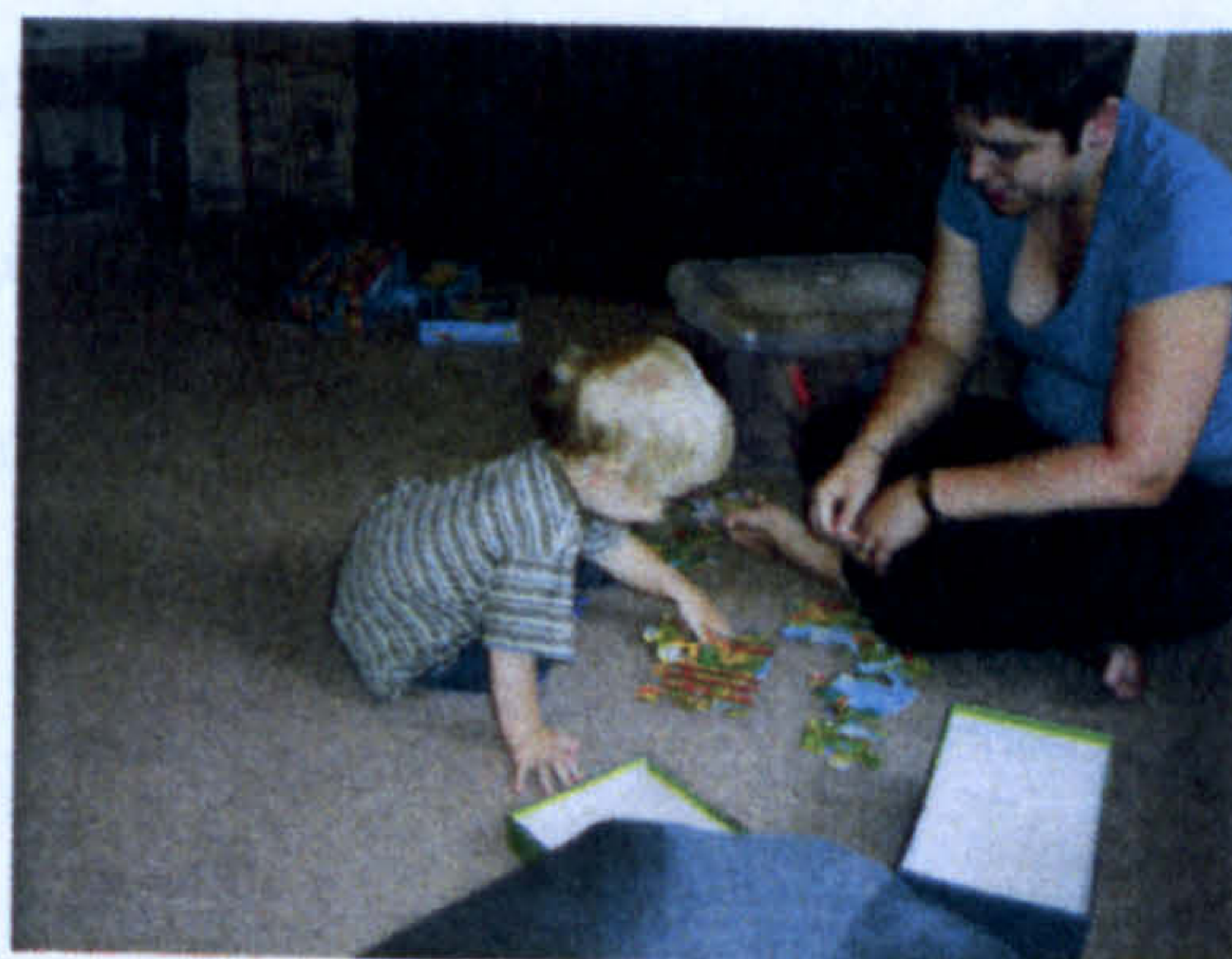
We have not had so much structure and routine and I think that has not helped his development into this. His play – I don't think it has deteriorated but it hasn't progressed in terms of he is wanting to do things that are harder than he was doing before but he didn't do them appropriately but now he will throw or mess with them because he hasn't got the ability/skills to do those things. Also because he is going to things which are way beyond his development– I can not do them with him because he just can not do them. He wants to do it properly now or as it is meant to be done. Because I have not necessarily been sitting and playing with him he has learnt to do things like that – his attention span is a lot less than it was because last time he got those out he would just get the box and I would do it with him. He has almost lost those play skills. I think he would probably still be able to do things that he used to do but because I am expecting it to be a bit more I haven't worked with him to develop that. It is interesting how once you loose that one to one time – you can see how easily, how children don't necessarily learn.

When Simon is playing with the train track there is a level of concentration but the sustained play is missing. He displays higher levels of frustration when the track will not go as he wants it to. This frustration is also evident in his interactions with the other two children and Ruth feels that this change in his attitude has been intensified by the fact that the other two have been at home all of the time. This has

meant that Ruth has to resolve situations with him differently. During the observation Ruth frequently has to try to avoid conflict between Simon and Millie. Previously he would have enjoyed Millie's play with the same toys as him but now he is much more territorial.



Simon is beginning to show an interest in doing puzzles and when he becomes engaged with them he shows his previous high levels of concentration and involvement.



His interest in books has diminished over the holidays and Ruth feels that he is getting too used to the resources that are on offer to him and that he needs her to help him to refocus on the things that he can do because at the moment he is wanting to do the things that Luke is doing and as a consequence he needs someone

to be with him to help him do it. At the moment there is not much that he enjoys doing on his own.

Simon has made progress in other areas of his life. He is now sleeping in his bed. This has not been an easy transition. The whole process has been aided by the *Bob the Builder* duvet bedding that Ruth has bought for him. Simon confirms this when he tells me about Bob and then goes upstairs to make sure that it is still there.

During the holidays Simon has had his social skills tested in that the family went away on teenage camp with Church. Ruth stated that Simon was fine with older children but that she still has concerns about his interaction with children of his own age. To improve this situation she is going to put Simon in a crèche when she goes to the gym and also to attend mother and toddler groups. They have decided that Simon will start at the playgroup in January in preparation for starting school in September 2007. "...we have got to have a bit of exposure to the larger group without me. I think he will be better without me because he knows how to wind me up."

Simon still wants to share his experiences with me and tells me about the ice cream that he had at the circus and how the monkey got on the car when they visited the safari park.

October 2006

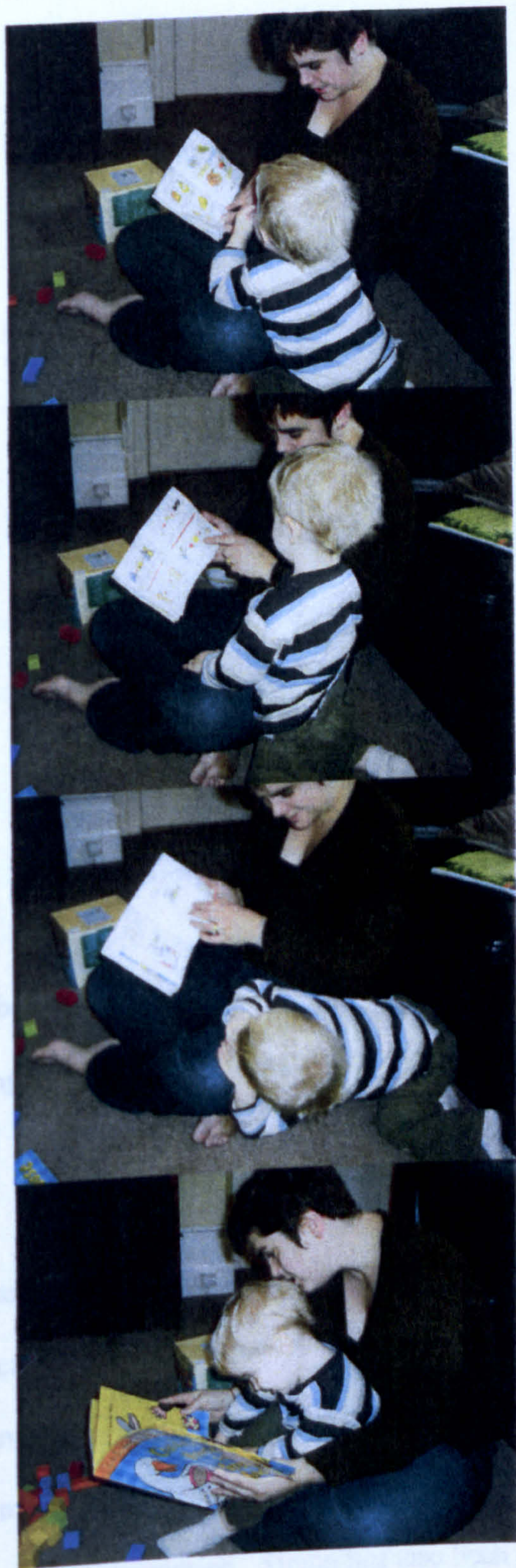
When I pull up in my car Simon is waiting for me and as he runs to the door he appears excited to see me. He instantly wants to engage with me by going to get his box of puzzles and asking me to help him. It is obvious from the start that Simon does not need my help to do these puzzles. As he completes the puzzle he tells me which pieces he needs and he completes it with ease. This play was seen at the last observation but it has obviously become his favourite activity.

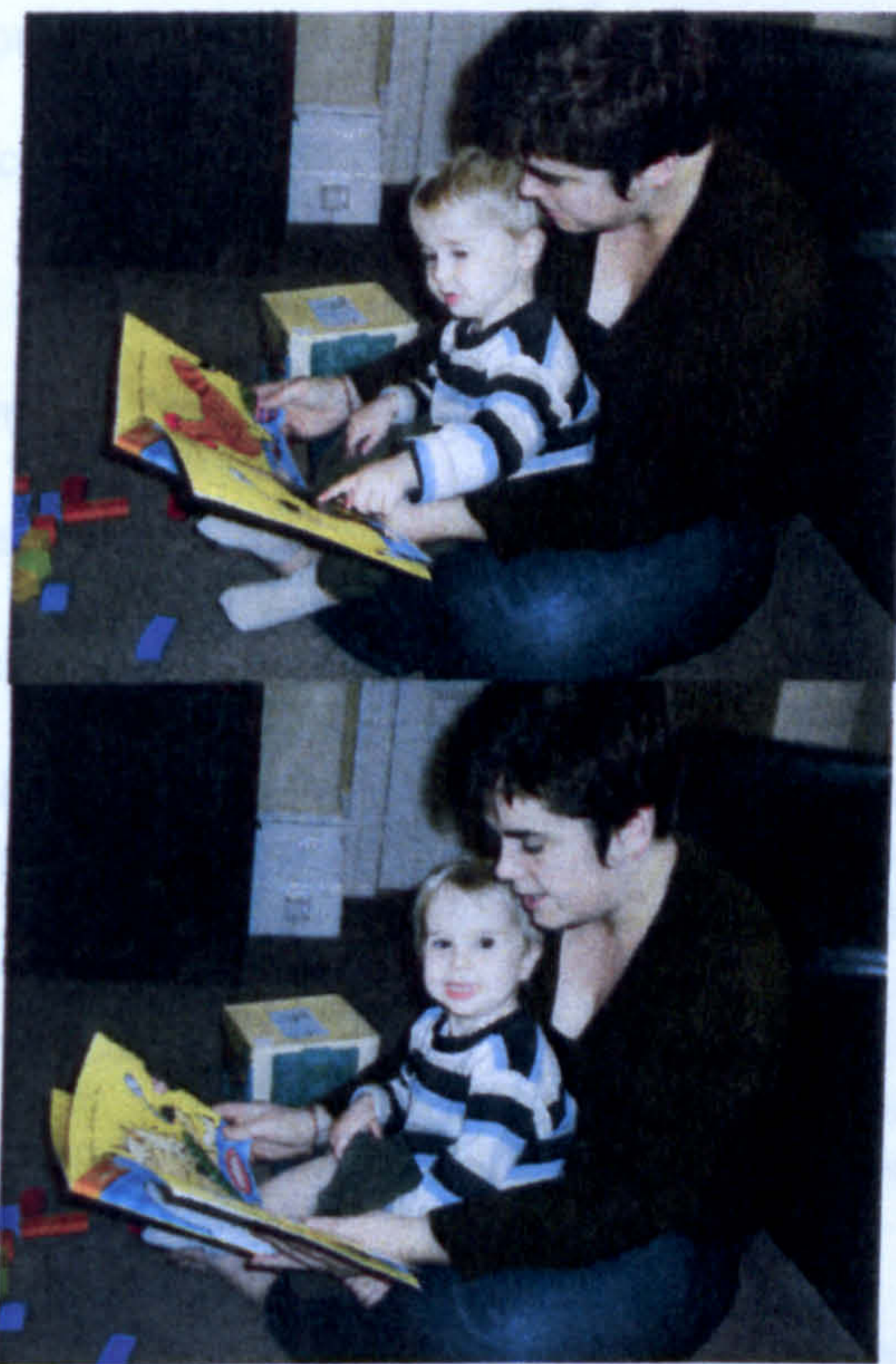


He is doing quite complex puzzles and will have a go at doing puzzles with 20 plus pieces. Interestingly Simon never engaged with the wooden inset puzzles. He appears to have missed this stage out; is this because he has been exposed to the more complex play of his older siblings? When doing the puzzles Simon shows

good spatial awareness and good hand to eye coordination, and the high levels of involvement and concentration have returned. As he finishes the puzzle he goes off to get another puzzle and insists that I help him, although he does not need help. Is it the attention and the support that Simon is really looking for? The things that Ruth said that he had not had during the summer holidays when there was a change in his behaviour.

The closeness that Simon has always sought with Ruth when reading books has also returned since the others have returned to school. He goes to select his own books and when he returns he shows me his choices. There is an obvious delight in reading the books and he interacts throughout, finishing the rhymes and pointing to pictures on the page. He chooses his own seating style and becomes absorbed in the books.





Ruth tells me that his behaviour has modified and that this has been helped by the development in his language which means that he can be talked through the difficult moments.

Simon has been exposed to some of the social experiences that Ruth was talking about. He goes to the crèche when Ruth goes to the gym and although it was difficult for the first few weeks he is separating well so that now when they arrive he runs off. Ruth comments that he has made an attachment with the adult and that this is the reason for the easier separation. Simon has also been going to some

mother and toddler groups and Ruth says that his interactions with the other children are less physical than they are with Luke and Millie.

Ruth comments that Simon is more confident in his ability to do things and also more independent. This is showing in the way in which he interjects in the conversation at meal times. Ruth says,

At the dinner table if they are saying what they have done during the day he has to have his say about what he has done. It is a difference in our expectations of him and what he is trying to do and also his role models for doing that. We didn't do that with Luke – with Nick's work we do that so that we all sit down together – it is more flexible. He will sit at the table even if like last night he had a snack earlier and didn't want much he still sat and joined in with the social side... He has just started conversation holding.

At the end of this visit as Simon and Ruth have gone through some changes in the way their life is operating I asked Ruth how she was feeling about the time that she was spending at home with Simon and how this compares with the decisions that she made when the other two children were younger,

It has got its interest level back a bit – it was good to have a change and now that he is enjoying things again it has got a bit easier and less frustrating – rather thinking that I was pacifying him all the time ... It is difficult to say – but I am a different person to what I was then- I couldn't have done it then and if I had I wouldn't have done it like this. I don't have to worry about the things that I did then like who am I – I couldn't have done it then and it wouldn't have been right and I was ready to go back to work when I did. It sounds weird. I was still trying to be two things then but now I don't feel I need to because I am that bit older and I can see the importance of what I am doing now and that it won't be for ever. I don't regret it because when I went back to work after Luke I needed to, I wasn't enjoying my days – but when he was in for 3 days I was enjoying the 4 days that I had with him. At that time it was right. I don't know whether if I just had one at this age I could do it still- but because I have the three of them I don't feel that I could do it. I enjoy it and the time with the other two because I have spent the day with him I don't worry when I spend time with the other two.

The closeness of the mother child bonding is apparent when Simon becomes tired and asks to watch a video, *The Road to Amarillo*; he snuggles into Ruth and becomes engrossed in the song and the video.



November 2006

Simon is on his own at home with Ruth now but because he goes to the crèche twice a week their lives are busy.

Simon has been on a visit to the playgroup. He was quite happy to leave Ruth and when the children went into another room for a story he was quite happy to stay even though he could not see Ruth. It appears that attending the crèche has contributed to this ease of separation. When I talk to Simon about his visit to the playgroup he tells me that he liked it and then goes on to tell Ruth about the play dough and how it came through the tube like a worm.

Simon has had another recent experience, firework night. He smiles when he talks about the sticky toffee apples but there is a look of apprehension when he recalls the

fireworks. Ruth explains that he liked them at the time but was frightened when he could hear them afterwards and when it got dark.

Simon has also had a visitor to stay. A girl, who previously Simon had some sharing issues with, stayed with the family at the week end. They got on well and played alongside one another, which is a good indicator for the future when he starts to attend the playgroup. Simon's social skills seem to have moved on; in the playground he tries to get others to become involved in games of chase.

Simon has gone to get a game and when he starts to play with it his fine motor skills are demonstrated. As the photographs illustrate he is involved, animated and showing levels of concentration. He is not playing the game as intended but he is following his interest in watching the balls come through. There is a blockage and Simon works out how to solve this problem so that he can release the balls.



Ruth explains that frequently he will sit and watch the others playing with more sophisticated toys. He will frequently choose these games even though he can not always use them properly. Ruth supports this play of Simon's by modelling and echoing vocabulary. She moves Simon's learning forward by narrating what she is doing so that he can associate the actions with the explanations. As Simon has been exposed to a range of toys for older children he is not really interested in those toys that are big and chunky and designed for children of his age. He has begun to show an interest in domestic role play both at home and in the crèche and will come and ask if you want a cup of tea. Ruth makes some interesting comments about the developments in Simon's play,

When he does get into something he will stay at it for hours. He is into counting now. If I have ever counted things before he now asks to do counting. He grabs my hand and we have to do it ... He is choosing more.

As Simon moves his play away from the marbles and starts to build with the Lego, supported by Ruth, he narrates what he is doing, which is what Ruth had been doing previously.

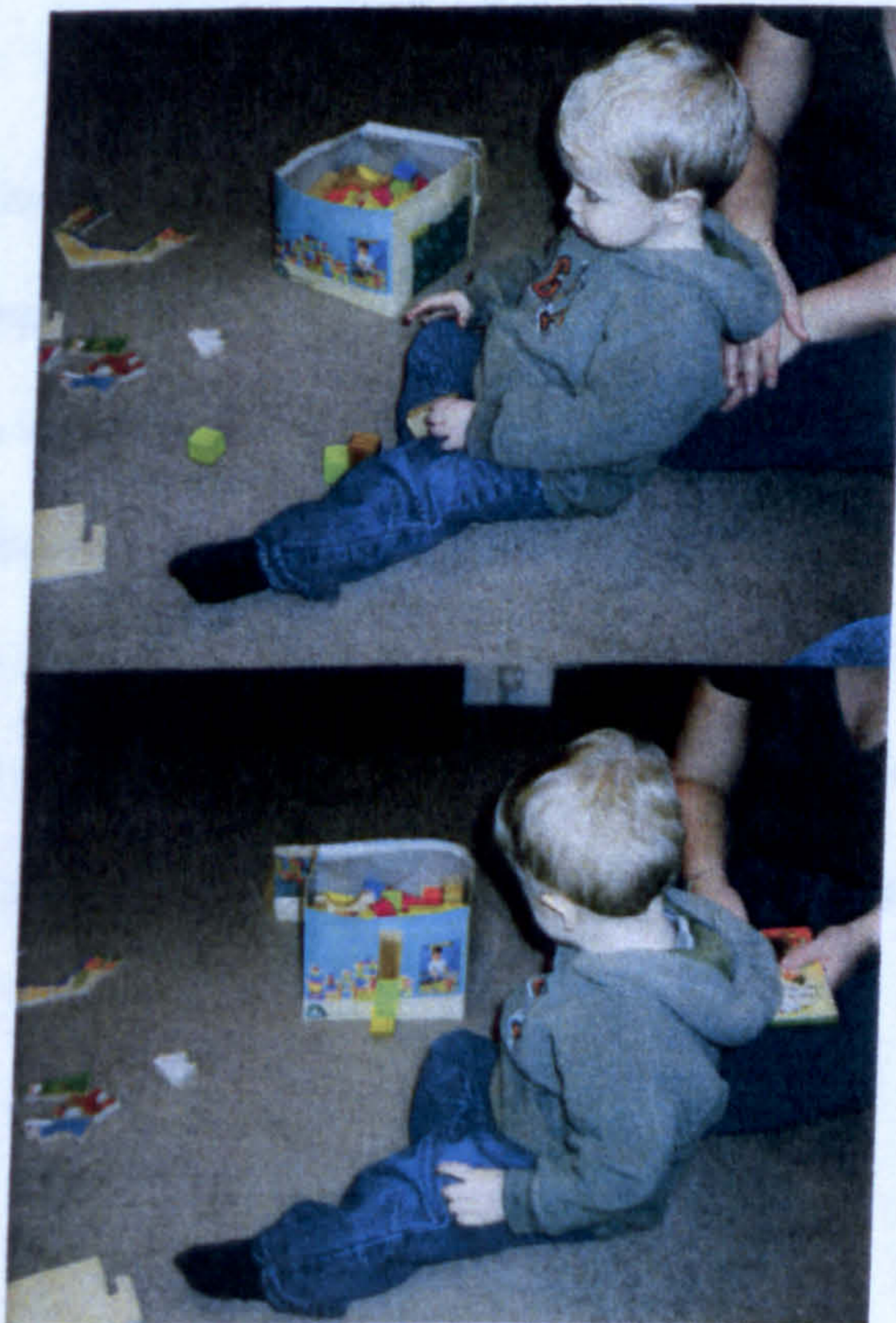
December 2006

Simon has returned to an old interest, my tape recorder. He sits and watches the counter going round and says that he can see the numbers moving. He looks for a while longer before saying the number, seven. Over the last month Simon's language has made further developments. He is now using four/five word strings on a consistent basis. This level of language development is shown when Simon shows

me a photograph of the three of the children and Ruth with Father Christmas (Ruth is there because although Simon was quite happy to go and see Father Christmas he was not that keen on sitting next to him) and he tells me who they all are, "That is Simon. That is mummy. That's Luke, that's Millie."

Simon is more independent and asking lots of 'why' questions where he is genuinely interested in the answers.

Simon gets the bricks to play with. He starts to build a tower but it falls down; he wants to build it on top of the box but as this is not successful he uses the side of the box to support his tower so that it will not fall down. As on the last observation Simon and Ruth narrate their play to each other as they build.



As he finishes his tower he begins to look at a catalogue, showing good levels of concentration and involvement.



Simon has also begun to show that he has the ability to manipulate adults to get what he wants. If Ruth has said no to something then Simon will go and look for his father and see if this strategy will be more effective.

Simon gets tired towards the end of the observation and I feel that my presence is making him 'play up'. Ruth's strategies with him are positive and she always ensures that Simon is making eye contact with her as she talks to him. Simon goes to get a musical interactive book and sits beside Ruth as he reads. When he presses the buttons he joins in with the singing, not prompted by either Ruth or myself. Ruth explains that he will frequently sing like this but will not do so in a larger group like mothers and toddlers. He does not sing as a performance but because he enjoys doing it.



multicrals but does not always give the correct out.

January 2007

Simon has started at playgroup and from the greeting that he gave me I assume that it is going well. He is very lively, pokes his tongue out and says, 'Na,na,na!'

Simon went on a visit to the playgroup with Ruth but as she had to go away Nick had to take him and Ruth thought that this could have been a problem. This was then followed by a week away on a family holiday which could have disrupted his pattern of settling in but Simon has adjusted really well and is happy for Ruth to say that she is going to do some exercise, which she used to say when he went to the crèche. Ruth comments,

That process before definitely helped having gone through that process before. That sealed the whole 'I definitely do come back' – and also because he's so used to the environment at playgroup with Millie it is not a problem.

Independently and had recently completed a 42 piece puzzle. Simon can be

Socially Simon has settled into the life at playgroup and is happy to talk to the family about his time in playgroup. In this talk Simon does not talk about the other children but he does talk about the adults in the playgroup. He is being exposed to

Simon's ability to play the same has developed. He has had different experiences and has become more confident. He talks about colours but his main interest is in numbers. He loves to look at numbers and he wants to count when reading books even if it is not a book that involves counting. This interest could be because Millie is doing a lot of counting at school. Simon is still playing games that he can not do. He goes to get the spider game and he talks about the colours and numbers of the spiders that he is catching. He appears to understand numerals but does not always give the correct one.



Simon is now using language beyond the standard vocabulary and he uses it in the appropriate context. There is so much more language and he uses it because he wants to say something. He wants to talk, to contribute to what is going on.

His interest in puzzles has developed so that he is now doing them completely independently and has recently completed a 42 piece puzzle. Simon can be territorial about his jigsaw puzzles. When a friend was there it was alright for her to play with other things but not the puzzle that he was doing; it was alright for her to do it once he had completed it.

Simon's ability to play the scene has developed. He knows when he has got an audience and loves to make others laugh, especially his brother and sister. He has a good sense of humour and he loves slap stick.

March 2007

I went to observe Simon for the first time in the playgroup. I arrive at the beginning of the session and observe that Simon does separate well from Ruth. When she leaves he goes straight into the role play area where another boy is playing. It is only when Simon is on his own in here that his play becomes more purposeful. Throughout the observation Simon plays alongside other children but there is little or no interaction. There is, however, interaction with the adults which reflects what Ruth has previously said about Simon talking about the adults at playgroup but not the other children. His engagement with adults is seen when he crosses the hall with a 'plate of food' to take to the adult. She gives a response but for Simon this is not challenging so he moves to the play dough table where another adult tries to engage him with how the cutters work but this is not on Simon's agenda, he just wants to use the adult to support what he can not do. When he is at the table Simon shows that he is a watcher. He looks closely at what the other children at the table are doing and after a while asks the adult to get him the same resource as another child and then he imitates her actions. The girl is older and is more proficient. Simon appears to gravitate towards the adults in the room. Is this where he feels the most comfortable? Is this the same model of interaction that he has enjoyed at home with Ruth?

When he moves around the room Simon demonstrates his self confidence and independence. When he goes over to the modelling table he chooses the resources that he needs and he starts to glue things together. He only involves the adult when he can not reach what he wants. He uses them as facilitators.

Simon's ability to use his language to effective use is demonstrated when he wants a resource that another child has. Simon does not confront the other child, he goes over to an adult and explains that he wants the toy. The adult supports this by talking to the other child about sharing and encouraging him to give it to Simon. The other child does not have the same language as Simon and is unable to express his want of the toy. This episode showed how Simon can manipulate a situation, especially as he has the language to be able to express himself.

When Simon goes over to the Lego play he talks to an adult, he wants her to join in. Although the adult begins to work with another child this does not bother Simon he appears to like her closeness, her presence is enough. He talks to her across the mat as he builds independently. There is concentration and involvement as he builds a tower. He talks to another adult about what he is doing, she joins in with his play and they talk and build together. Another boy interrupts this play by showing his picture to the adult, so Simon goes off to paint. He freely accesses the paint but is looking around and is distracted. When an adult joins him there is involvement again. He uses his language to describe his picture and with the adult there he continues to paint

Simon appears to need the presence of the adult, not necessarily the involvement, for him to sustain his interest in his play. He also shows that he has skills at manipulating the adults who are obviously very fond of him. Interestingly although Simon does make eye contact with me he does not acknowledge my presence. I am in the wrong place and therefore am not the right person.

May 2007

I made another visit to the playgroup. I was interested in Simon's reaction to me; would there be a different reaction from the last visit? Would he recognise me? Would he approach me?

When I first arrive Simon is playing alongside some others in the water tray where he is pouring and filling with dried pasta pieces. He is with other children but there is no interaction. He is involved and displays high levels of concentration. He is scooping and filling and occasionally looking up to see what the others are doing. As on the last visit Simon often refers to the adult to show her what he has collected in his sieve.

When Simon leaves this area he goes over to where another older boy is sitting near the slide, there is a brief exchange and the other boy moves away. Simon has a couple of goes on the slide and then follows the boy but he is concentrating on his writing and does not respond. It is at this point that Simon notices me. He starts to stare but he does not approach me. He goes to sit at the table for snack. The table is

closer to where I am standing and Simon does make eye contact but he looks away quickly.

When Simon is sitting waiting for his snack it is apparent that his socialisation has moved on to another level. At the table he starts to blow raspberries and to sing Baa, Baa Black Sheep and to copy what the other children are doing. He begins to play with a boy sitting next to him; pulling on each other's hands and laughing. When they are given flannels to wipe their hands the children around Simon start to wipe the table top.

Whilst he is eating Simon can be seen to be watching all that is going on around him. There is much more social interaction and he appears to be enjoying the company of the other children. He talks to the others at the table and they begin to make sounds as a game together. Simon bangs the table and he tells the others to hush by putting his finger on his lips as he notices that the adult is coming nearer. After snack he gets up and goes over to the puzzle box, he tips out the pieces and begins to put them together. He leaves after a short time; I suspect that this puzzle is too simple for Simon having seen the more complex ones that he has done at home.

When the book box comes out Simon goes to choose one. The older boy is there so Simon chooses a book for him and he eventually selects one for himself, a *Spot the Dog* lift and flap. He goes through the book to the end before getting up to ask to go

to the toilet. It is interesting that Simon selects activities that are familiar and comfortable for him.

At one point Simon walks right past me glances, smiles and then ignores me.

Simon's ignoring of me is interesting especially as on this occasion he made eye contact with me.

June 2007

I was interested to see if there would be a difference in reaction to me if Simon saw me in the playgroup and at home. I arranged to go to the playgroup in the morning and to visit Simon at home in the afternoon.

When I arrived at the playgroup Simon saw me straight away and then hid behind the walls of the playhouse. As I settled down he moved to the next room so that he could not see me. When he returned from the toilet and giving me a wide berth Simon asked the adult to carry him past me. Although she did not respond to this request I was considering leaving the playgroup if my presence meant that Simon would not interact and settle. I was sitting at the puzzle table, a favourite activity of Simon's, and he came over and after a while began to interact with me so that he eventually came to stand next to me. There were some moments of cooperative play when another girl joined us. The puzzles posed no challenge for Simon but he was quite happy to complete them. When we discussed this in the afternoon Ruth commented that she knew they did not give him challenge but that she felt Simon's

level of puzzle play was something that could not be catered for within the playgroup environment and that he got his challenge in other ways.

The development in Simon's language became evident when I joined him at the table for snack. Interestingly when another boy asked what I was doing, Simon replied that I was writing about him.

A boy crying at another table prompted Simon to say, "Tears coming down from his eyes. I cry in my bed at night for mummy". This conversation then progressed as he talked further about his bedroom, "I got dummies in my bed". When I comment that he is wearing sandals, Simon replies, "I got brown sandals."

Most of Simon's conversation on this occasion is around my presence as the following talk evidences,

I got a bath upstairs. I eaten all of my cake. It is in my mouth. Yummy! I am having orange. Animals are coming out. Look there the animals. You write animals. Do you want orange. You write orange. You write cup. I just did a burp. A funny burp. You write animals (*I show Simon that I have written animals*) You write two animals. You write my tongue.

Simon's language has now become sophisticated with long strings and the beginnings of punctuation which can be identified by the way in which he uses intonation. When I visit Simon in the afternoon Ruth comments on his language development, "His language has definitely changed. He is using a lot more complex language ..."

I was personally very pleased with this observation because Simon was happy to interact with me and as a result I was able to observe more closely the ways in which he has developed. He is very secure and happy in the playgroup. He shows good independent skills. Although most of his play is parallel play there are episodes of cooperative play. He often appears to approach the older boys especially when they are engaging in physical play, something which Ruth comments on in the afternoon when I visit Simon at home.

When I arrive at the house Simon is no longer confused about my presence and is happy to accept me in the same way as he used to. He also makes references to having seen me at playgroup. When I arrive Simon is on a chair playing with the computer. He has high levels of concentration and he demonstrates good coordination as he uses the mouse to navigate the site that he has chosen. There are levels of skill here that I am surprised to see in a child of Simon's age. Ruth comments that he has developed these skills by playing alongside Luke. She comments that he has got persistence and that he knows what he is trying to do. This becomes clear when he has to explain to us how the programme works,

I expected it when they were at school but not now ... I would have expected to be sitting with him and I would probably been a bit more didactic because I was sitting with him. But because he is sitting and learning with Luke or Millie it is a different way of teaching. They will let him have a go and if he does it wrong they will sort it out. Rather than showing him all the time.

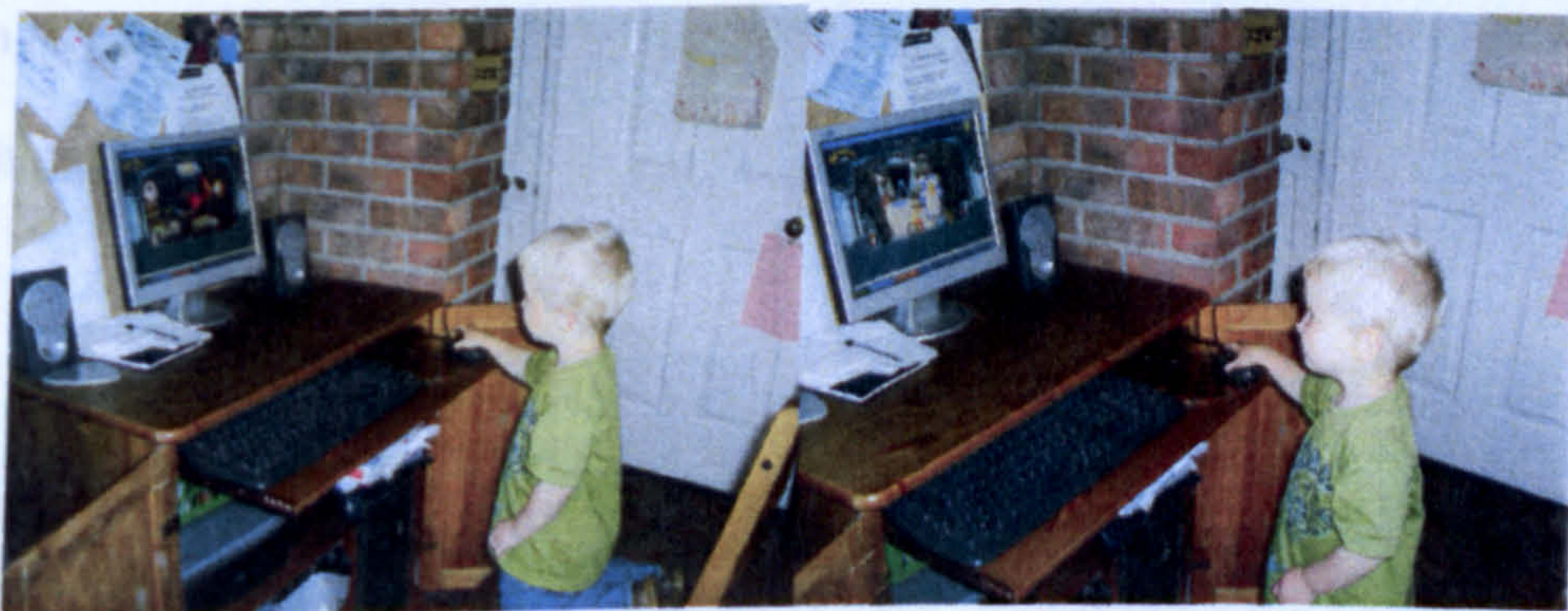
Ruth develops this discussion further by commenting,

I wonder whether when you have two children you don't notice it as much because you still have more time to be with the second one. There isn't that much of age difference but because there is such a huge age difference

between Luke and Simon the breadth of what he is exposed to is much more. Simon is using the computer more than Millie because he is interested in it. I have expectations according to his age of what he should be doing and I think nursery staff are similar because they think that is what two year olds do and that is what two years olds play with but there might be a portion of the group who might be passed that but have never been exposed to it and you will never know.

As Ruth and I talk Simon asks for help in navigating the choices that he wants to make. Ruth does not go over and take over she uses talk to direct him, telling him where to move the cursor. From this exchange it is clear that Simon is very aware of the differences between words, pictures and symbols as he follows the instructions. When I comment on this Ruth says that when they are reading books,

... he will say, 'Say the words'. He will point at the words. He has got the idea that that is what I am actually reading. He will get very cross if I don't read it and he will try to get me to say, 'That word', which is the first word



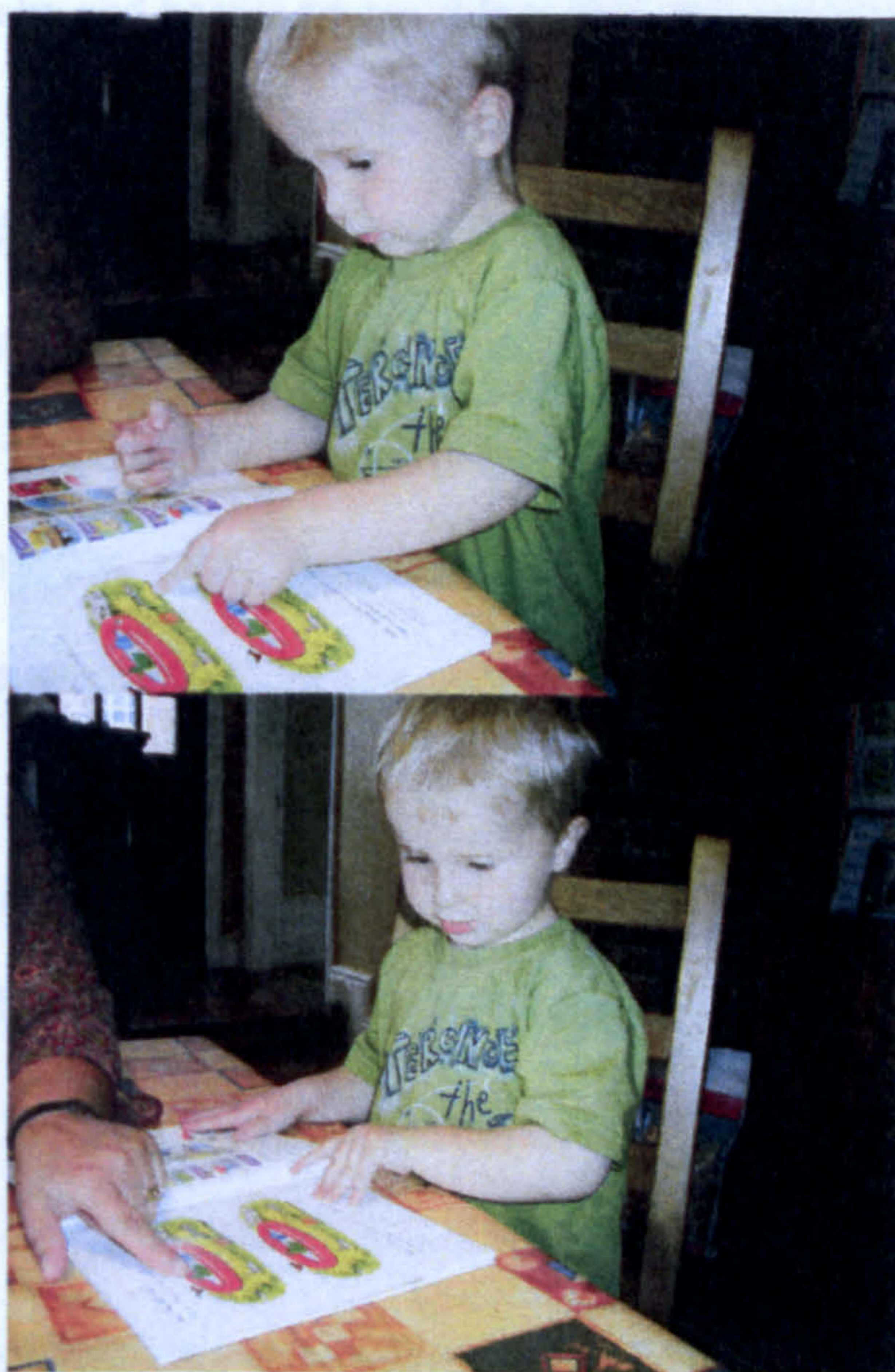
When we talk about the playgroup, Ruth comments that he is now excited about going. She feels that he has settled well. Ruth says that socially he is secure in the group although she is not aware of any friendships having been formed.

He has not mentioned any children. I haven't seen him form any majorly strong friendships. He has got a couple of friends but they are not at playgroup. He likes to attach himself to outgoing, adventurous little boys. Older boys ... he likes the whole action side of it. He is really rather

physical. In a humour way. Luke and Millie do it often. He likes the slapstick element of this play.

Simon is going to go to school in September but Ruth is still going to keep some playgroup sessions as well but that she will reduce those if he is too tired. Ruth feels that he is ready for school because of the way in which he has developed over the last three months, especially in his independent skills. He is now toilet trained and he is doing things like putting on his own trousers. He has the confidence in his motor skills which is evidenced by the way in which he now realises what he needs to do in order to swim.

Simon has still maintained his interest in books. He goes upstairs to fetch some of his favourite books which are now being influenced by the books that Millie is bringing home from school. The photographs show that Simon looks very closely at both the pictures and the text.



Ruth describes an incident when the family went to Wales at the week end. Everyone had an impromptu Karaoke session and Simon seriously entertained everyone by holding a hair brush as a microphone and singing a song. She comments that Simon has the same ability as her to remember the lyrics to songs so that he is now word perfect in the songs in *Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat*.

Ruth informs me that the family are going to foster and that the children have been involved in the discussion about how these children would not be with them permanently. Ruth says that she did say to Simon they might have a little baby and that he will be able to look after it. "We were then watching a video of his cousin

when she was a baby and he was saying things like, 'I want one like that.'" At a later stage he told Ruth that he did not want a baby which shows that he has an understanding and that he is sorting it out in his own mind. She feels that out of the three children it will be a shock for Simon and that his behaviour could become more challenging which is why the family have told social services that it had to be in July or October so that a baby did not come just as Simon was starting school, which could create more issues.

Depending on the outcome of the panel in July it may not be appropriate for me not to visit the home for the last visit when Simon will be three.

July 2007

On this visit to the playgroup I observed the slap-stick enjoyment that Ruth has referred to in other observation visits. Simon was sitting at the table waiting for snack and he was enjoying being with a group of older boys. They were playing with the flannels and Simon was obviously enjoying the social interaction. On this visit there was more social interaction observed than at any other time.

Simon acknowledges me by smiling at me mischievously and then ducking behind one of the other children. There was no distress in this acknowledgement.

When all of the children leave the tables Simon goes off with the same group of boys. It appears that when he is involved in this type of play there is involvement or extension of his learning.

Simon soon leaves this play and goes to play with some small trays filled with sand, shells, pebbles and lolly sticks. As I move to sit next to him Simon begins to vocalise telling me what he is doing, "I am making a house with the shells. This is my house. A big house and a small house. Anglesey house. Little house for you. I made a hole."

This shows that Simon is using resources to represent and that he has the language skills to describe what he is doing. Although his previous play suggests that he is becoming a social player, Simon is not pleased when a girl starts to play in his sand and disrupts his involvement. When she moves Simon resumes his play and his conversation with me. "Little shell. Big shell for you. Granddad dropped me at playgroup. Making big pile. There a big pile. I got two sticks." After this Simon returns to his imaginary play with the sand telling me, "Oven. I put in oven. I make an oven. (*Simon starts to sing, Run, run you can't catch me I'm the Gingerbread man*) I make a circle."

Simon stays engaged with this play for a sustained period of time. He is involved and interested. He breaks off his play as he wants to wash his hands. He then goes to the role play where there are 'doctor' resources. At first he appears to be

engaging in this play as he goes to take the blood pressure of another child, but he soon becomes more interested in pumping to watch the dial move round.

When he has finished in the role play area he comes to join me on the sofa. As he bounces he starts to sing *Ring-a-ring-a-roses*. When another child comes to sit next to me Simon turns to him and says, "I sitting there." Simon is not prepared to share yet! We then look at a book that has flashing lights at the end. In line with his previous interests in cause and effect resources, Simon is more interested in how the lights are in the book. He is pleased when he discovers, "You close the book and the lights come back on."

This is the last visit that I will make to visit Simon in the playgroup. Although he has only been attending since Christmas Simon is emotionally secure and has developed his social skills. He enjoys interacting with the other children but when he is involved in an activity he does not like to share. His language skills continue to develop as does the pattern of preferred play; when there is a resource that involves some element of cause and effect he becomes interested.

August 2007

When I arrive to observe Simon he is sitting with Millie on the back steps eating a biscuit. Luke is bouncing on the trampoline and Simon and Millie are laughing because as he jumps he is making the fallen leaves move. When they have finished their biscuit the two younger children go to join Luke on the trampoline. Simon

shows his confident gross motor skills as he navigates his way onto the trampoline and starts to bounce with his siblings. Simon is at ease in this company and he shows that he is now socially competent as he joins in with the games and can be seen to instigate some of the play.

When the children leave the trampoline they move their play to the sand pit. The sand is moist and they ask if they can have some water. Luke fills the tray with water and Simon immediately engages with investigating the containers that are already filled with wet sand. In some of the sand filled cups he finds that there are marbles embedded in the sand and he starts to dig them out. He then moves onto pouring and filling the bottles. He shows high levels of involvement and concentration as he accurately pours and fills.



Simon is happy to play alongside his siblings and occasionally looks up to see what they are doing in the sand. When Luke and Millie move off to play elsewhere Simon starts to put the bridges in place and then informs us that he is going to find a car. He goes into the house and returns with a black car which he immediately starts to move the car over the bridge.



Simon remains involved in this play for a while until he starts to get wet. He comes to tell his mother that he wants dry clothes and starts to take off his shirt and shorts. Once this is done he returns to the sand before moving into the house with the other children.

In September Simon will be starting at maintained nursery school. For Ruth and Nick there has always been the concern that he will only be just three when he starts school but they feel that the experiences that he has had at playgroup have prepared him for this transition. He will continue with some sessions at playgroup as the nursery is a part time place to gradually introduce him to the concept of being out of the house for a whole day.

The family are also going to have more changes and challenges as the arrival of a foster child is imminent. Ruth informs me that Simon has been part of this process and has now begun to be actively involved in preparing for this new arrival. He tells me that there are toys in the baby's room and that the baby will sleep in a cot, which indicates that he has now accepted this addition to the family unit. The family are aware that there will be some issues when the baby comes but they feel that it will also benefit the children, especially Simon as he will no longer be treated as the baby of the family.

This is the last observation in this case narrative as Simon will be three this month. I ask Ruth about her feelings about the time that she has spent at home with Simon she returns to the theme that this was the right choice for her at this time in her life especially as she has had the experiences with the other children. She said that she has enjoyed her time at home with the children but that she feels that this has to be a personal decision.

I have really enjoyed it because it is busy and it is constantly changing. It has been nice not to have the stress of work or things that are out of my control. The things we have done have been in my control so it has allowed me not have my time with them influenced by external pressures. We have been very lucky. I worry that by fostering we are introducing stress that is not absolutely necessary but that is the real world.

When I asked Ruth if she could stay at home once Simon started school or would she feel internal pressure to do something outside of the home she responded by saying,

All I would do is take irrelevant things that don't matter and worry about them. You always find something. I know that is my personality. But with this it will fit in.

Ruth concludes this three year case study by talking about her time at home,

I can genuinely say that I have enjoyed the time since I have finished work. I am always conscious of the fact that it won't always stay like this and I need to enjoy it. Things will change as they get older. When he goes to school I will no longer be that main influence. For Simon especially I will no longer be that main influence. He does still rely on me more than the other two did ... you have to work at being at home with them and then it becomes exciting for you.

This case study was very different to the others in this thesis and as such draws some different conclusions. Ruth opted to stay at home when Simon was born, fitting into the historical perspective advocated by Bowlby (1989) and Belsky (2001). It is only when this pattern of childcare is investigated in more depth by asking Ruth for her personal perspective that she reflects the position of women as primary carers as raised by Pocock (2003). Ruth talks about the 'duties' that she carries out in the home now and when she was working. From these discussions it is clear that Ruth feels that when she was working the decisions about childcare for her two older children were hers. Ruth's reflections on her time at home show that when the outside influence and pressure of work had an impact on the way in which family life was run. This point is also reflected in the work of Pocock (2003).

Unlike the image of family life today, conjured by Palmer (2006), the family in case study narrative two, and more importantly Ruth, made positive decisions about their childcare and work arrangements to benefit all of the members of the family. This

was shown by the candid comments that Ruth makes about her own needs and self identity (p.300).

In the case study narrative of Simon Vygotsky's theory of ZPD (1978) is illustrated in September 2006 (p.305) when Ruth commented on the change in Simon's development when she had not been involved in challenging his play because the other two children were on holiday. The presence of the other children raises their involvement in Simon's development. Throughout this case study narrative I reflected on the fact that Simon's development was different because of the presence of his older siblings. Simon is exposed throughout these observations to the play of Luke and Millie, and as a result his learning was challenged as they became role models that he could imitate. In March 2006 Ruth and I reflected on Simon's exposure to resources not normally given to children of his age. His exposure to more advanced mark making materials meant that Simon had adopted the correct pencil grip by the age of 18 months; his role modelling of the game boy remote control at 11 months gave him skills to enable him to operate a computer mouse and navigate a computer programme; his access to complex puzzles enabled him to complete 40 plus piece puzzles by the age of 3. To this effect not only the older siblings but also the exposure to different resources illustrated Vygotsky's theory of ZPD (1978).

The older siblings and exposure to more sophisticated resources also support the request for further research into having mixed age group rooms in day care settings,

by the *National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative: The Relationship between Quality and Children's Behavioural Development* (Mathers and Sylva, 2007) and the *Quality of Childcare Settings in the Millennium Cohort Study* (Mathers et al, 2007). The latter of these studies did question the lowering of challenges for the older children as adults would be monitoring the use of resources by younger children and catering for their care needs.

The greatest influence factor on Simon's development was the involvement of a skilled and knowledgeable adult, his mother. As the initial observations reveal there is a strong bond between mother and son. This bond not only manifested itself in the love and care that Ruth gave to her son but the quality of the communication and interaction. At an early stage Ruth is able to interpret Simon's cries (p.248) and is also skilled in the use of 'motherese' (Trevarthen, 2002). Whenever Ruth was with Simon she engaged in talk with him; making good eye contact, leaving spaces for him to respond, respecting him by telling him what she was doing and interpreting his responses. Observing these interactions and seeing the way in which Simon's language and social skills developed with skill and confidence, highlighted the need for adults in day care settings to engage with this type of practice and to establish good partnerships with parents so that parents can pass on the knowledge that they have about their children. The importance of this type of interaction is echoed in the words of Gopnik et al (1999, p. 28)

... they can tell the difference between expressions of happiness and sadness and anger, and even can recognize that a happy-looking face, a face with a smile and crinkly eyes, goes with the chirp of a happy tone of voice.

CHAPTER 8

CASE STUDY NARRATIVE 4

Lynda

This is the diary of Lynda who attends a private day nursery for three days a week.

When I started the observations of Lynda she was fourteen months old. The observations commenced in December 2004 when Lynda was in the toddler room.

December 2004

Lynda is walking. She acknowledges my presence by making eye contact with me on several occasions. Lynda has a dummy in her mouth so it is difficult to know if she is making any vocalisations. She moves around the room a lot and engages in play that involves taking things out and putting things into different containers.

When the adult asks for the dummy Lynda declines; there is a look in her eyes that suggests that she is laughing. She is happy and content and appears to feel safe with the adults. When other children approach her to remove the dummy Lynda does not react. There is little or no interaction with her peers.



On several occasions there is music and singing; Lynda responds to this by swaying and clapping with the appropriate response.

January 2005

Lynda repeats the reaction to music from the last observation. She does not have her dummy; this has been replaced by a drinks beaker and a comforter.

Lynda again studies me and makes good eye contact. She is an independent and confident child. When she no longer needs her drink she goes to put the beaker into one of the drawers. When other children challenge her for resources she does not react. A boy comes in and he is upset, Lynda shows that she is concerned.

The adult in this room always sings action rhymes with the children and it is obvious by the way in which she reacts that Lynda really enjoys this. She joins in

with the actions and sways in time to the rhythm. When a drum is introduced, Lynda enjoys banging it whilst still rocking back and forth.

Lynda spends a lot of time moving around the room, flitting from one resource to another. She never settles at one thing. She is content not to be next to the adults. I feel that if an adult picked up on her play and interacted with her, then Lynda would sustain the activity for longer. Is Lynda's interest in music part of her agenda or is she responding to the adult's involvement in singing with the children? Is this why she is involved and shows more sustained levels of involvement, because the adult is moving singing forward but not following the cues of the child-initiated play?

There are more vocalisations as Lynda does not have her dummy.

February 2005

The dummy is back and even though the adult asks for it, Lynda screws up her nose, smiles and walks away.

Lynda is now more comfortable with my presence as she not only makes eye contact with me but also physically approaches me.

Again there is a lot of physical activity from Lynda, moving from one thing to another. The main theme of Lynda's play today seems to be accessing the rockers that are placed around the room. She does show a more sustained interest in a book.

She turns the pages and looks closely at the pictures. Again the majority of Lynda's play is solitary.

When the adult does manage to remove the dummy Lynda is more vocal.

Lynda appears to have a mischievous side as she often copies the inappropriate behaviours of the other children.



As Lynda is happy and content on her own and causes the adult no issues they appear to leave her to get on, giving more focused attention and interaction to those children who need it more.

March 2005

Lynda is making more babbling sounds now that the dummy is not used as much.

When the adult commences a mark making activity involving dipping crayons into water; Lynda instantly indicates that she wants to take part. She uses gestures to effectively communicate her wishes to the adult. When she starts this activity Lynda shows good levels of involvement and concentration. She sustains this activity for longer than any of the other children; it is also the longest period of sustained play that I have observed Lynda engage with.



During the observation I observe Lynda teasing some of the other children. When getting down from the table she gets on and off her chair, preventing a boy from getting on it. When he has had enough he physically takes ownership; Lynda cries and is rewarded with repossession of the chair. A similar incident occurs later when a boy comes to join in with her play, she teases him for a while and then gives him a look which says, 'I am not sharing!'

There is more physical interaction with adults as Lynda frequently goes to different adults for a cuddle.

April 2005

Lynda has her dummy and comforter. The adults try to get Lynda to take it out but Lynda becomes selective in her hearing and ignores them. Towards the end of the observation Lynda offers the dummy to the adult; she is in control of this situation.

When the dummy is removed there is a noticeable difference in Lynda's vocalisations and she can be heard chatting and babbling to herself as she plays.



The children engage in singing action rhymes and Lynda becomes animated. She joins in with the singing and the actions. It is clear that Lynda is anticipating the actions.

There is less flitting on this occasion; much more involvement and interaction.

June 2005

There is no dummy and there is a definite change in Lynda's involvement, interaction and vocalisation.

Lynda spends time making marks on the paper with wax crayons and is also interested in scratching the wax off the crayon. Lynda is now asking for what she wants and there are clear words. She stays at the activity for a sustained period but moves from mark making to wax scratching to becoming interested in stacking the pencil pots. The adult does not pick up on this play. There is no interaction which could have included vocabulary extension as well as posing challenging questions such as, "How high can you build it?", "What if ...?" and "Can we ...?".

There is purpose to Lynda's play as she goes off to get a doll; she wants to sing *Miss Polly*. Lynda does all of the actions. This play is then linked to some specific doll play.



Lynda is still independent; this shows in the way in which she leads her own play. The adults are beginning to follow her play; perhaps this is why there is more involvement from Lynda.

July 2005

Lynda is in control. A mother asks where her son's bag is; Lynda goes off to find it for her.

Lynda now joins adults who are playing. She plays alongside with the mega blocks. She makes growling noises as she plays. When Lynda's tower breaks she is unperturbed and rebuilds it.

There are more words; big, pen, again, bigger. Lynda seems to be experimenting with the sounds that she can make.

When the adult starts blowing bubbles Lynda becomes interested, not only in the bubbles but also in the wand and the bottle. Lynda is interested in the size of the bubbles. From this activity Lynda goes to initiate a game of rolling the ball across the table with another adult.



In comparison to the other children in the room Lynda's play has moved on to another level; self initiated and more sustained.

August 2005

Lynda is still playing independently. She does not like other children invading her space. A boy comes up to cuddle her, he is persistent; Lynda pushes him away and changes her position so that there is a distance between them.

This distance does not apply to adults. When one adult indicates that she is going to move the tables Lynda bends down getting ready to help. She is very effective and she enjoys this helping role. When the adult suggests that they look for Jess, another child's toy, Lynda races to get there, knocking the other child over to get there first. This roughness is not to have the toy for herself, as she immediately gives it to the other child.

At singing time Lynda suggests, *Row, Row Your Boat*. She is involved and when she suggests singing *Miss Polly*, she runs off to find a doll, making the links between the song and the physical resource.

Lynda is saying a growing number of single words and is doing more echoing.

When she is talking with the adult about eyes the adult picks this up and develops it by talking about other parts of the body.

Lynda looks ready to move on to the next room.



December 2005

It is three months since I last observed Lynda and there are some major developments. She has now moved to the next room. Her language is clear and meaningful. Her play is sustained and full of repetition.

Lynda is playing in the sand filling and emptying the bucket. It is still solitary play. She is engaged and engrossed. Lynda is not bothered when another child takes her bucket; she simply goes to get another one. She works out a strategy to balance the bucket on the edge of the tray. During this play Lynda becomes involved in some interaction with the adult. She is no longer playing alongside the adult, she is involved with her. The adult role models some strategies which Lynda copies. Lynda is still leading her play.



Lynda goes over to the sand tray and fills the bucket. She is still without adult assistance. She goes to the sand tray and fills the bucket with sand and no paper to do this. She goes to the sand tray and fills the bucket with sand. The adult sees this and responds by saying 'You can't do that' and offers a choice.

January 2006

Lynda is asserting herself with some of the other children. One boy takes a bite out of her bagel and she is upset. When the adult gets her something else to eat and brings it in on a plate, Lynda tells all of the other children that this is 'My plate!'

Lynda's independence and self confidence shows when she goes with a group of children and an adult to wash her hands. She talks to the adult about the missing sink which she says 'is broken' and that a 'man will fix it'. She talks to herself as she washes her hands. She concentrates on soaping her hands and when she feels that there is enough she goes to show the adult. She thoroughly rinses all of the soap off.

At circle time Lynda is sitting in the middle and she is initiating all the songs and actions. She is dominant and she is quietly in control.

February 2006

This observation of Lynda is possibly the best adult interaction that I have witnessed in my many visits to the setting.

Lynda goes over to the painting easel and puts on an apron; she does this without adult assistance. She stands in front of the easel; there is nothing to paint with and no paper so she brushes her hands over the smooth surface of the easel. The adult sees this and responds asking her if she wants some paper. Lynda is offered a choice

and she selects pink. The paper is clipped up and Lynda says, "Painting. I got an apron on."

Lynda is not perturbed by having to wait, she is very patient. At one time the adult suggests to Lynda that she goes to paint with another adult who is about to do a painting activity, Lynda does not respond so the adult goes off to find Lynda some paint.

As she gets the paints Lynda says the names of the colours and begins to paint with a brush and then she begins to use her hands to mix the paint that is on the paper. When she is doing this Lynda makes lots of "Oh!" noises. Lynda now starts to take the paint out of the pots with her hands.

Lynda is not at all bothered when some other children are attracted to what she is doing and start to join in with her picture by putting their hands on the wet paint. More and more children come over to join in with her. One boy in particular persists in putting paint on his hands from Lynda's picture. Lynda is getting very excited and she tells the others that the painting is becoming unattached "Its coming off! Wait." She tries to put it back herself. She talks to the others, "Do not rip paper. I painting on it". The paper falls off, "MY picture!" she keeps repeating, to protect her painting from another boy taking it. Lynda is assertive but not aggressive. As the paper falls down Lynda starts to paint the surface of the easel instead.



As the boy who was getting his hands in the paint has been putting prints all over the room and the furniture, the adult has responded to this by putting large pieces of paper on the wall with some paint by the side. The adult asks Lynda if she would like to come and join in with this activity and put her hands on the wall. Lynda goes over to join in. She turns round to show everyone her paint covered hands.

This whole activity followed Lynda and her interests. It flowed from when she wanted to paint on the easel.

When she has finished Lynda goes to wash her hands in the big bowl. She is enjoying putting her hands in the water and she washes her hands efficiently.

Lynda now goes to where another adult is doing a painting activity. As she watches Lynda makes lots of "Oh!" sounds (this has been occurring all through the observation). Lynda is confident and assured. She watches as another child does the string painting and she is excited by what is happening. She is content to watch. Lynda then decides that she would like to have a go herself.

Lynda makes definite choices about what paper she wants to use. She starts to string paint but again she is more interested in putting her hands in the paint and not using the string. Lynda is really involved. The adult does not come in with her agenda and she lets Lynda do what she wants and towards the end Lynda does pick up the string but again she is not interested in it.



This was a fabulous observation of Lynda, especially because of the ways in which the adults followed her needs and interests. Lynda showed on this occasion that she does what is on her agenda and not the adults.

March 2006

The children are hand painting and Lynda is watching them. The activity is disrupted because one child (new to the room) appears to be upset by my presence and this is affecting the adult's involvement and preparedness.

As the activity moves on, slowly, Lynda is very patient. She decides which colour paper she wants. She is excited when the paint is on her hands echoing the adult's words; cold, tickles. When the adult comments about the speed with which Lynda is painting, she gets faster and faster. Again Lynda shows that she enjoys this type of hands on experience.

April 2006

The adult initiated activity that Lynda is doing does not engage her and she can be seen to be going through the motions. Screwed up tissue paper on to a pre drawn shape!! Lynda quickly finishes and says with discernment and conviction, 'No more now!'

Lynda goes to another table where the children are painting with their hands, again. This does appeal to Lynda and she stands watching until she can get her hands into the paint. She becomes involved straight away, she makes excited noises and she is more vocal and animated. Lynda has her own agenda; unlike the others she wants the paint on the paper. When the adult asks Lynda if she would like to squirt the paint herself, she declines explaining that her hands are wet. The adult initiates mark making with her finger and Lynda imitates.



Lynda is still playing on her own. When another child comes to join in when she is on the soft play, she ultimately takes it over so Lynda leaves and goes over to the ball pool to start throwing balls; I am not sure if this is random throwing or if she is aiming them at the other child!

When the children are getting ready to go outside Lynda puts on her own coat and perseveres with trying to do the zip. Lynda's communication skills are good; she speaks in complete sentences which are grammatically appropriate. She initiates talks.

May 2006

Lynda has moved upstairs to a new room. The change does not seem to have affected her as she is still listening attentively to all that is going on and is responsive to any adult involvement. In these responses she is on her own, the other children are not as involved and they do not respond as enthusiastically to the adult as Lynda does. Her communication skills are developing as she not only echoes the

words of the adult but she makes comments about the story that she is listening to and extends this by adding her own anecdotes. Lynda has intonation in her conversation and she uses gesture to illustrate what she is saying.

When the group time moves on from listening to a story to singing action rhymes Lynda does all of the actions. She initiates conversation with me.

Lynda appears to be settled in her new room; could this be because the adult in the previous room has also moved up with her and this has given Lynda continuity of care.



August 2006

It is impossible for me to observe Lynda without her engaging with me. She talks to me about the book she is reading and has to be persuaded to go and join in with the play of the other children. When a boy arrives in the room it is apparent that Lynda has a special bond with him. She is excited and animated when she sees him. She

does not settle to her play until he joins her. It appears that she is the dominant partner in the relationship but as the observation develops it is a true partnership with both having their say in what happens and what games they are going to play.

They play alongside one another with the play dough; they talk and they share. Lynda sometimes takes on a motherly role ensuring that her friend has all the dough that he needs. When he leaves the play she follows. They are not mutually exclusive as they play and share with other children. When another child has a tantrum because he has not got his own way Lynda is not impressed and she encourages her friend to come and sit with her in the easy chair. The two friends sit side by side and share a book. They talk about the pictures, pointing and laughing with one another. Both children sustain their involvement in their chosen activities. They concentrate and move their own play forwards.



Lynda has developed into a social player.



This was the last occasion that I observed Lynda for this study as she was three in October 2006 and I was unable to observe her after August due to her absence and my professional commitments.

Lynda has an easy-going temperament which has meant that even when the adult interaction was poor and unchallenging, Lynda has been independent enough to access activities where she has created her own challenges. In the time that I observed her there were no behavioural issues. As the observations progressed it can be seen that Lynda developed social skills which enabled her to engage with both adults and other children.

The fact that many of the adults in this setting did not use their observations of Lynda to challenge and move her learning forwards shows that here Vygotsky's (1978) theory of ZPD where the adult supports and structures a child's learning did

not happen. As the adults rarely became involved in her learning it was Lynda herself who moved her learning forwards. This is reminiscent of Brofenbrenner's (1979) belief that it was not only the interaction of the adult who could move learning forwards but also the influence that the child has on his/her own learning and development.

The importance that Brofenbrenner (1979) also attached to the range of experiences that adults offered to children is relevant to this study of Lynda. In one period of time, February to April 2006, the experiences or activities that were on offer to the children were very similar; these were creative activities with paint and offered the children the opportunity to explore the paint. This was an activity that Lynda was interested in but perhaps if the adults had looked at offering children experiences with different media such as clay, mud, gloop or materials for transient art the children would have more complex learning experiences.

Reflection on the case studies

As the case studies have shown, the influence of adults upon children's emotional wellbeing and cognitive development was clear. All the children formed relationships with adults, some stronger than others and there were no indications of emotional insecurity. The case study of Mark shows, however, that when he forms attachments with two adults in particular there is an improvement in his behaviours as well as in his learning and development. There was also evidence in the observations that at Sunshines Nursery the adults consulted with Amy about her move to the next room.

Adults in the settings needed greater awareness of the importance of forming attachments with young children and how such attachments can impact on children's emotional well-being. The children in the study needed experiences which helped them to establish emotional security as reflected in Maslow's (1943) 'hierarchy of needs'.

The case studies illustrate that in Tiny Feet Nursery the children were always consulted when they were having their nappies changed or when they were picked up. Adults in both nurseries were aware of their importance in the lives of the children but as the case studies have shown the adults in Sunshines Nursery, seemed less aware of the role of the key person.

The case studies indicate that two nurseries in this study differed in terms of organisational relationships. At Tiny Feet Nursery the practitioners were clear that they could support each other and that the manager was also supportive of the way in which relationships with children were developed through the existence of an effective 'key person' model. Sunshines Nursery had no such clear philosophy or ethos and staff team did not feel supported at critical times.

CHAPTER 9

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS

When I first started this research I had been working in a local authority since 2000 as an Early Years Consultant where the focus of my work was to support settings in the voluntary, independent and private sectors with children in receipt of the Nursery Education Grant (NEG) to deliver the Foundation Stage Curriculum. As much of my work was within settings where children under the age of three were receiving care I found it hard to separate these children and ignore what was happening to them. Surely, I felt if you are looking to create quality environments to provide quality care and learning you need to look at what comes before? Children do not suddenly need attention when they are three; learning, socially and emotionally, starts before they are even born. 'The development of the brain has a long trajectory, beginning within a few days after conception and continuing through adolescence and beyond.' (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 185) These thoughts and the much welcomed launch of the Birth to Three Matters Framework (DfES, 2002) highlighted the needs of the under threes and was the incentive for me to use this research to look closely at what happens to children of this age who attend out of home settings.

As previously stated I also recognised that I had personal issues that could be addressed through this research. I am the mother of three children now aged between 20 and 23. My eldest daughter attended full time day care until the age of

18 months, when I was expecting my son. This experience gave me an empathy with mothers who also needed to return to work from financial necessity. Personally I found it a distressing experience as I had not originally planned to return to work after her birth and so was open to all the guilt feelings of being a bad mother. Now in my mid fifties and during the course of this research I have reflected on my feelings and have sought to come to terms with the idea that I let my daughter down.

My research journey has given me the privilege of meeting mothers in the same position as well as mothers who have chosen this path in a positive way. I have also had the great opportunity to observe a baby brought up at home and to have open and frank discussions with his mother about her feelings on the upbringing of her three children. In one of these discussions I asked the mother whether with hindsight she regretted returning to work when her older children were born. I was impressed by the candour of her response because she talked about her needs as well as the needs of her children. She felt that at the time when she chose a childminder for her first child she could not have stayed at home because at that stage in her life she still needed to have the challenge that working offered her personally,

I don't have to worry about the things that I did then like who am I – I couldn't have done it then and it wouldn't have been right and I was ready to go back to work when I did.

When I was transcribing this conversation it made my personal reflections more poignant. Although my reasons for returning to work were different the person and mother that I was after the birth of my other children probably meant that my eldest

daughter did not suffer as a consequence of attending a day nursery. When commencing this research she was a difficult university student and the two of us had some troubled times, but with hindsight, no more difficult than the relationship that I had with my mother at the same age. My mother stayed at home to bring up her daughters. I felt the guilt of those nursery days because I felt that this was why we had difficult relationships. That perhaps there had been a lack of bonding. As the two of us have moved on and more importantly as I have realised through this research it is not just the day nursery but more importantly the secure family life that contributes to this bonding.

Perhaps one of the many things I have learned through this research was prompted by my observations of Simon and my own personal reflections as the mother of three children. The youngest child benefits from the interactions with and the exposure to children of different ages. Younger siblings access resources outside of the 'recommended' ages and therefore acquire the skills that they observe in older children. This was also confirmed in the second case study setting where all of the children, 0-5 years old, access the same environment, with the under two's in a fenced off area but where they still have contact with and visual access to older children.

My professional role within an authority has had an impact on the way in which I had to structure my research. As stated it was impossible for me to recruit settings from another authority to engage with the research and so I had to use two day

nurseries that I was supporting in my professional capacity. I was fortunate in both incidences that this dual role did not create a conflict of interests. I think that this was because I had already established good working relationships with both proprietors and managers and also because I made it clear in our initial discussions that what I observed would remain separate from my professional role, unless I observed anything that was illegal. I also kept all concerned informed about my contact with parents so that an ethos of honesty and openness was established.

A major advantage of observing within these nurseries was that I was able to carry out my observations during my working day (a system of flexi-time was operated) without the necessity of spending time travelling long distances to another authority. As the research grew time was a factor that had to be taken into account. I had originally intended observing a larger number of children but as the longitudinal implications of the research became clearer I realised that the smaller the cohort of children the easier it would be for me to manage alongside my full time working week.

The local authorities in which I worked gave me a day a month to support my research. I tried to take this day as often as I could but frequently my professional commitments meant that this was impossible to do. I generally used part of this study day to visit the baby at home. This was convenient because he lived locally to me and again this meant less time wasted in travelling.

One of the hardest aspects of this research has been the time management of the observations in conjunction with my working week. This has been because of the ages of the children involved; this research could only be carried out during the day and had to be planned round the attendance patterns of the children. I had to drop the observations on one child when his attendance pattern changed so that he was not in for any of the same days as the other children I was observing. The timing of the observations was also crucial, especially when the children were younger, because of their sleeping routines.

Despite all of these issues I was able to carry out monthly observations mainly due to the support of the authority and in particular my line manager.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis set out to answer the following research questions:

- What are the experiences of children under three in group care settings?
What are the perspectives of the adults involved?

This chapter systematically responds to the research questions in relation to each of the two settings, the children's experiences and the perspectives of parents, practitioners and setting managers.

10.1 What are the experiences of children under three in group care settings?

Conclusions of the thesis in terms of this first research question is now considered in relation to:

- Sunshines Day Nursery
- Tiny Feet Day Nursery
- Simon – at home

10.1.i Sunshines Day Nursery – children's experiences

In Sunshines Day Nursery I analysed and interpreted the observations of the children's experiences in three different ways. Lynda's observations were analysed

in the form a diary, Mark, Josh and Ben's were analysed as the experiences of three boys in one peer group, as they progressed through the nursery, and Amy and Tim's were analysed using the Framework developed as part of this thesis. All three methods of analysis and interpretation showed similar outcomes in the experiences for these six children. **The greatest influence on their experiences were the practitioners and the skills that some possessed and the skills that the majority of them did not possess. Minimal knowledge and understanding of the Key Person system is a particular issue here, and my original Framework highlighted the need for organisational structures to support the development of attachment.**

Lynda

The observations of Lynda showed that in many ways the setting did not meet her individual needs to challenge and move her learning forwards. The setting and the practitioners appeared to have missed opportunities to plan for her individual needs and as a consequence there were times when her learning experiences were not matched to her needs. The observations, however, clearly show that Lynda was happy in this environment and that all of her personal, social and emotional needs were met. This was clearly demonstrated in the final observation where Lynda has formed a close friendship with another child. Within this relationship Lynda's caring nature is shown. Observations indicate that the setting has offered Lynda the opportunity to develop by creating an

environment where she is in contact with a group of her peers and where she can have the opportunity to establish relationships.

Mark, Ben and Josh

The observations of Mark, Ben and Josh were analysed in a different manner to Lynda's and they revealed that in many areas the setting appeared not to offer the three boys' positive experiences. This failure was exhibited mainly when the setting failed to meet the stated preference of Mark's parents by not offering consistent and quality access to the outdoor environment. This lack of access to the outdoor environment meant that for Mark many of his nursery experiences were negative. It is clear from the observations that he is a boy that would have benefited from accessing his learning experiences in a larger and more challenging space, as described by McMillan (1930).

Ben's experiences were also negative in that it appeared that practitioners failed to optimise his potential for learning by not responding to cues in his play. This was exhibited in one of the later observations when the adults prevented Ben from accessing the resources in the way in which he chose.

The observations of Josh also illustrate that the nursery failed to offer him experiences which would have challenged his learning. His language skills appeared to confound the practitioners who did not appear to be sufficiently skilled to develop them.

The experiences of these three boys were heavily influenced by the skills and knowledge of the adults caring for them. When a knowledgeable adult is present the boys have good experiences in their learning. This is in line with the conclusions of the EPPE research (Sylva et al, 2004). The care the boys received in the nursery was good and none of them showed any signs of distress. They all showed attachment to particular adults. It is clear that the organisational culture is not one which works to the benefit of the boys in this case study, fuller understanding of their needs and structures to support staff in meeting their needs is needed.

Amy and Tim

The experiences of Amy and Tim were analysed using the Framework, which is an original outcome of this thesis. The observations of Amy were fed into the first Framework (Table 4.2, p. 122) and Tim's observations were fed into the second and final Framework (Table 4.4, p.144). When looking at the two completed Frameworks questions are raised about the adults working with babies and young children and the status that is given to their training and qualifications. The majority of the adults working in this setting are young and qualified to NVQ 3. My analysis of the observations suggests that the greater need is for practitioners to be more highly qualified and for them to have a wider knowledge of how children learn and develop, reflecting the EPPE research (Sylva et al, 2004). The two Frameworks show that the practitioners are well able to meet physical needs of the babies and children and that health and safety issues are given a higher status than the

role of adult interaction and the environment. The Framework is a tool which highlights omissions and strengths in adults roles – other frameworks have hitherto failed to do this.

10.1.ii Tiny Feet Day Nursery- children's experiences

In the second of the settings used within this study, Tiny Feet Day Nursery the experiences of three children, Georgina, Melanie and Martin were analysed alongside one another on a monthly basis. All three children in this setting had positive experiences. The analysis of their observations showed that all three children were challenged in their learning and were well supported by knowledgeable adults.

Melanie

The analysis suggests that Melanie's experiences were the more positive, perhaps because she reflected some of the stereotypical images of a child of this age; she was quiet, easy-going, interested in books and presented no challenges to the practitioners. Melanie also came to the nursery with interests that were obviously well supported at home. The observations made showing her knowledge of nursery rhymes is evidence of this.

Georgina and Martin

As with the analysis of the observations of the children attending Sunshines Day Nursery, Georgina and Martin's experiences at day nursery appeared less positive

because they had no access to an outdoor environment, something which would have supported both of their learning styles.

10.1.iii Simon – at home

The observations of Simon the child cared for at home were analysed as a diary over the three years of the study. The observations in this case study were also contributed to by his mother. In the observations of Simon and those children attending Tiny Feet Day Nursery the contribution to learning and development of older role models was one of the results of the analysis. There were examples in the observations of Melanie where an older child was able to scaffold her learning. The scaffolding by an older child relates to Vygotsky's theory of ZPD (1978). Simon was not only exposed to the play of his older siblings but to resources that the 'market' would designate as age inappropriate. This was evidenced in the way in which Simon was using the correct pencil grip at age 18 months.

Simon, Melanie, Georgina and Martin were all able to mix with older children; Simon because he had older siblings and the other three because the setting was based in one room and all of the children played together from age 2 upwards. Even before this age they could see the older children playing and they joined them for social times, such as meal times, and when an adult took them to play in the other area. Mathers and Sylva (2007) identified benefits for the younger children when they are exposed to the play of older children, and disadvantages for the younger

children in terms of emotional development and behaviour. My observations in Tiny Feet and of Simon found no evidence of these disadvantages. Could this be because of the quality and skills of the adult involvement for these children?

This study has demonstrated the benefits to children of mixed age groupings in day care. Whilst further research into the benefits of offering care in mixed age groups is needed, this thesis shows clearly that children gain in their learning and in their relationships with others when they are not rigidly confined to rooms determined by their age.

10.2 What are the perspectives of the adults involved?

Conclusions of the thesis in terms of this second research question is now considered in relation to:

- Sunshines Day Nursery – parents’ perspectives
- Tiny Feet Day Nursery – parents’ perspectives
- Perspectives of staff, managers/owners
- Perspectives of Simon’s mother

10.2.i Sunshines Day Nursery – parents’ perspectives

The interviews with parents at the start of the study and the exit questionnaire showed that during their time of accessing a day care setting, the participating parents at Sunshines Day Nursery reported that they were happy with the care

that their children received but that they had doubts about their children's learning development. In this setting the parents also felt that there was little or no partnership or sharing of information and that staff were often changing so that it was hard to establish relationships. These parental perspectives are corroborated in the conclusions made from the case study narratives of their children.

10.2.ii Tiny Feet Day Nursery – parents' perspectives

In Tiny Feet Day Nursery the perspectives of the parents are very different. The parents expressed their satisfaction with the ways in which their children were developing as well as the quality of adult relationships that were established with themselves as well as with their children. In this setting these relationships were established through an effective 'key person' system (Elfer, 2003)

An outcome of this thesis in regard to the perspectives of parents is that parents have positive experiences when they have good relationships with the staff within the setting and that these relationships have a positive impact on the way in which their children learn and develop. The thesis demonstrates how the organisational culture can facilitate or hinder such relationships.

10.2.iii Perspectives of staff, managers/owners

When answering the question about the perspectives of the staff and manager/owners it was clear by the way in which the managers talked about the

how they ran their nurseries and identified strengths and weaknesses, that their role was pivotal in influencing the perspectives of all those involved within this study.

The manager of Tiny Feet Nursery felt that because they were offering care in the same environment she was better able to have an overview of what was happening within the setting. This overview enabled her to have an understanding of the practitioners' strengths and weaknesses and gave her the opportunity to help staff develop their practice. The practitioners in this setting also identified that working within the same environment enabled them to have better relationships with children and with the team as a whole. They felt that they were able to support one another because they could easily identify when others were having difficulties.

In Sunshines Nursery, the nursery organised in rooms, the manager identified that because of the pressure of paper work she was less able to monitor practice and quality as she had few opportunities to observe and oversee practice.

This thesis shows the need for settings to have systems where the manager can regularly observe and evaluate the practice in the rooms. Future research should focus on the role of managers in settings with particular reference to how they influence the practice and quality of the nursery in particular in terms of relationships and attachment.

10.2.iv *Perspectives of Simon's mother*

The analysis of the perspectives of Ruth, who stayed at home to care for her younger son, show that she found this to be a positive experience. The candour of her responses showed that she felt that for mothers this is very much a personal decision and that there is not a 'one size fit' for families. Ruth felt that for her this was the right decision at this time but that when her older children were born she was not personally capable of staying at home full time to care for her children. A decision, she felt was to the benefit for all the family.

When reflecting back on the emotional responses of the other parents this study shows that the decision to put their child into day care is not an easy one for parents, mothers in particular, and recommends that future research is needed into the perspectives of parents to support them in their decisions about child care.

Finally...

This thesis has developed different methods of reflecting on observations and an original *Framework for Analysis* of observations. Two of the case narratives were analysed as diaries, two were analysed as an overview of groups of children and two were analysed using the Framework which was developed as part of this thesis and is a key outcome.

The study highlights the benefits to children of being cared for in mixed age rooms where they had contact with older children who acted as role models, and also enabled access to the more challenging resources provided for the older children.

The study also indicates that managers can be a major influence within a day care setting and that it is their leadership which can enhance the quality of the experiences for children and parents this should be an issue for further research.

A key achievement of the thesis is the detailed narrative accounts which contribute new knowledge of children's experiences in day care, thus enhancing our understanding of how high quality provision can be developed further to meet their learning and development needs.

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APPENDIX 1

Overview of the Subscales and Items of the ITERS-R (Harms, Cryer and Clifford, 2003)

39 Items organized into 7 Subscales

Space and Furnishings

1. Indoor space
2. Furniture for routine care and play
3. Provision for relaxation and comfort
4. Room arrangement
5. Display for children

Personal Care Routines

6. Greeting/departing
7. Meals/snacks
8. Nap
9. Diapering/toileting
10. Health practices
11. Safety practices

Listening and Talking

12. Helping children understand language
13. Helping children use language
14. Using books

Activities

15. Fine motor
16. Active physical play
17. Art
18. Music and movement
19. Blocks
20. Dramatic play
21. Sand and water play
22. Nature/science
23. Use of TV, video, and/or computer
24. Promoting acceptance of diversity

Interaction

25. Supervision of play and learning
26. Peer interaction
27. Staff-child interaction
28. Discipline

Program Structure

29. Schedule
30. Free play
31. Group play activities
32. Provisions for children with disabilities

Parents and Staff

33. Provisions for parents
34. Provisions for personal needs of staff
35. Provisions for professional needs of staff
36. Staff interaction and cooperation
37. Staff continuity
38. Supervision and evaluation of staff
39. Opportunities for professional growth

APPENDIX 2

TCRU Group Day Care Observation Checklist (Munton et al, 2002)

TCRU GROUP DAY CARE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

1. Core Questions

THE GROUP OBSERVED

Number of Children _____

Number of Adults _____

Gender of Children (F) _____ (M) _____

Number of Children with Special Needs _____

ACTIVITY OBSERVED (Please tick or specify)

Gross Motor (eg. bikes, climbing frame, push along toys, etc) Sand/Water Snack/juice time
 Fine Motor (eg. board games, beads, puzzles, shape sorters, etc) Music Tidy-up time
 Art Related (eg. paints, dough, crayons, cutting, etc) Group Story Time
 Imaginative/Pretend (eg. puppets, home corner, etc) Books
 Other (Please specify) _____

Is the activity Indoor or Outdoor? (Please tick)

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES - CORE QUESTIONS	YES					NO	
	5	4	3	2	1	NA	
1 Do adults give appropriate help as and when needed? Score 5 if: Adults are consistently sensitive throughout the observation to children's needs. They can be seen watching children, and intervening when necessary. For example, they demonstrate the use of equipment, toys, puzzles etc. help children with their feeding as required, help infants sit, stand, etc	5	4	3	2	1		
2 Do adults respond sensitively to children's verbal and non-verbal signals? Score 5 if: Adults can be seen listening to and responding to children's questions; adults respond to the gestures, facial expressions, and sounds that children make; adults approach children who are withdrawn, upset or need help/comforting:	5	4	3	2	1		
3 Are independence and self-help encouraged under proper supervision? Score 5 if: Children are encouraged to do things that challenge them to develop new skills, but adults monitor their progress and provide physical and/or verbal help as required; eg., toddlers are encouraged to walk with buggies etc.; children serve themselves at mealtimes; children are encouraged to get out/put away games and equipment on their own; children are encouraged to dress themselves	5	4	3	2	1		
4 Do children appear to be engaged in activities? Score 5 if: None of the children being observed can be seen aimlessly wandering around or showing signs of being bored/frustrated by the activity. All children being observed are engaged in what they are doing. Adults do not simply ignore children who appear to be withdrawn.	5	4	3	2	1		
5 Do adults talk positively to children? Score 5 if: No shouting, criticising, sarcasm or threats are heard throughout the observation period. All adults being observed talk to children in positive, warm tones. Voices are not raised unless a child is in physical danger.	5	4	3	2	1		
6 Do adults label objects for children by naming and at the same time pointing to or holding the object? Score 5 if: Adults take every opportunity throughout the observation period to help children recognize objects by deliberately drawing attention to them, naming them and	5	4	3	2	1		

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES - CORE QUESTIONS	YES					NO
	5	4	3	2	1	NA
encouraging children to associate the name with the object						
7 Do adults respond to what children say by encouraging them to develop their comments into a conversation? Score 5 if: Adults take every opportunity to encourage children to provide more detailed verbal responses. Adults elaborate on infant utterances. For example, when an infant says "tractor", the adult elaborates by saying "yes, that is a tractor you are riding; an infant says "eaten peas", the adult elaborates by saying "yes, well done, you have eaten all your peas"	5	4	3	2	1	
8 Are children asked questions requiring more than yes no answers? Score 5 if: Adults take every opportunity to ask children "how", "why", "what" and "where" questions to encourage children to think about their activities. Where children have language skills, adults ask children questions that encourage more than "yes" or "no" response.	5	4	3	2	1	
9 Do adults interact with children with positive non-verbal behaviour? Score 5 if: All adults being observed consistently smile, laugh with and listen to children throughout the period. Adults maintain eye contact when talking with children.	5	4	3	2	1	
10 Do adults interact with children at their own physical level? Score 5 if: Adults either crouch down, sit on the ground or on low level seating when talking with children.	5	4	3	2	1	
11 Do adults verbally praise and reinforce children? Score 5 if: Adults consistently make specific and deliberate comments during the observation period that verbally acknowledge and reinforce children's good behaviour and accomplishments.	5	4	3	2	1	
12 Do adults encourage children to listen and talk to other children? Score 5 if: Children are in no way restricted from talking to each other; adults promote turn taking in conversations; adults can be seen asking children to tell other children what they are have been doing; adults create situations in which children learn from each other by listening and asking each other questions	5	4	3	2	1	
13 Do adults encourage children to co-operate and share with one another? Score 5 if: Adults can be seen to use every opportunity to encourage children to take turns and share materials equipment; games activities are set up in such a way that promotes cooperation between children; children work in pairs or small groups on tasks such as getting out putting away equipment	5	4	3	2	1	
14 Do children appear unafraid? Score 5 if: All children being observed do not appear intimidated by either adults or other children, eg they may approach adults, ask for help, initiate conversations and appear relaxed in what they are doing.	5	4	3	2	1	
15 Do children appear to be generally content, happy and enjoying themselves? Score 5 if: All children being observed are for most of the time smiling, laughing and not showing any signs of distress.	5	4	3	2	1	
16 Do adults appear to be generally happy in what they are doing and seem to enjoy being with the children? Score 5 if: All adults being observed appear to be creating a positive, warm atmosphere with the children e.g adults can be seen smiling, laughing, and being enthusiastic.	5	4	3	2	1	

ICRU GROUP DAY CARE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST
2. General questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTIONS	YES					NO
	5	4	3	2	1	NA
1. Are children involved in helping to plan activities? Score 5 if: older children are encouraged to talk about, in advance, what materials they may need for a project, encouraged to plan outings, etc.; adults encourage children to think ahead.	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Are some periods during the day provided for children to choose their own activities? Score 5 if: children can at least make a choice of what to do from a range of materials activities provided by the nursery. Infants are seen to be given a range of toys to choose from.	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Is the learning child-paced? Score 5 if: ample time is given to complete tasks for those children who work slowly and children who complete the tasks quickly can move ahead.	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Do adults modify tasks/ activities to take account of a child's individual needs? Score 5 if: the child is able to achieve success on activities without feeling frustrated or angry.	5	4	3	2	1	
5. Do adults provide the child with repeated opportunities for learning and practising skills? Score 5 if: the child is given time to practise and grasp how to successfully complete tasks and activities set by the adult and the child her/himself.	5	4	3	2	1	
6. Are adults flexible in the activities they have planned for the child? Score 5 if: planned activities are not followed rigidly and the child, other children or the adults themselves are able to suggest new activities or extensions of old ones	5	4	3	2	1	
7. Do children get an opportunity for individual attention from adults? Score 5 if: children and adults can be observed in one-to-one interaction.	5	4	3	2	1	
8. Are opportunities provided for all children in the nursery to spend time with one another? Score 5 if: during some periods of the day, eg., mealtimes, outdoor playtime, story time, children of different ages, different abilities, and with different needs are together, eg., children with special needs are integrated, toddlers have contact with pre-schoolers etc.	5	4	3	2	1	
9. Do adults encourage both girls and boys to participate in the activity and use available equipment without discriminating between the sexes? Score 5 if: girls and boys have equal chance to play with all gross motor equipment, dolls, cars, lego. Boys can play in the home corner, be nurses etc and girls can use the construction materials, be doctors, train drivers etc.	5	4	3	2	1	
10. Is adult contact with children sensitive at all times? Score 5 if: adults do not push, shove or pull children unless in an emergency; physical punishment is not used to control children.	5	4	3	2	1	
11. Are transitions between activities handled in such a way that children do not remain unoccupied? Score 5 if: e.g. adults use the change-over period between activities as times for conversation with children; and/or adults involve children in the preparations for the next activity.	5	4	3	2	1	

TCRU GROUP DAY CARE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

3. Physical environment questions

THE NURSERY	YES					NO
INSIDE AREAS	5	4	3	2	1	NA
1 Is the nursery generally clean? Score 5 if: all walls, floors and equipment are clean.	5	4	3	2	1	
2 Is the kitchen inaccessible to children unless supervised? Score 5 if: children cannot go into the kitchen area unless an adult is present to supervise them. If the cook is present but otherwise engaged with his/her activities this would mean that the child is not being supervised.	5	4	3	2	1	
3 Are laundry facilities (washing machine, tumble dryers etc) inaccessible to children? Score 5 if: children cannot go into the laundry area unless an adult is present to supervise.	5	4	3	2	1	
4 Is all electrical equipment safe? Score 5 if: all electrical sockets within children's reach are covered, flexes on radios, TVs etc cannot be pulled or tripped on and electrical fires have guards	5	4	3	2	1	
5 Are accessible radiators kept at a safe temperature or fitted with a guard? Score 5 if: none of the radiators are so hot as to be a danger to children, or all radiators are covered in a way that makes it impossible for children to touch them. Thermostatic radiator controls that can be tampered with by children DO NOT count as an adequate safety device.	5	4	3	2	1	
6 Are dangerous objects items kept out of reach? Score 5 if: all objects such as pins, adult scissors, cleaning materials etc. are kept in locked cupboards or otherwise out of reach	5	4	3	2	1	
7 Do artistic creative activities take place in a clearly defined area room? Score 5 if: there is a space set aside permanently or temporarily within the nursery which allows for activities such as painting, sand and water play to take place.	5	4	3	2	1	
8 Do quiet activities take place in a clearly defined separate area room? Score 5 if: there is a space set aside either permanently or temporarily within the nursery for sitting quietly, reading and listening to story tapes etc.	5	4	3	2	1	
9 Are rooms areas comfortably heated? Score 5 if: none of the children show obvious signs of being either too hot or too cold. All rooms are heated to temperatures suitable for activities observed. For example, areas designated for gross motor would not be heated to the same temperature as rooms used for more restful activities; rooms will also be heated differently according to age group. i.e. infants room warmer than toddler room	5	4	3	2	1	
10 Is there sufficient space for children to play freely? Score 5 if: no obvious signs of overcrowding have been observed. Children have enough room at tables during fine motor activities, the indoor play space is large enough for children to move around without getting in each other's way. Sand and water play do not interfere with other activities.	5	4	3	2	1	
11 Is the child sized furniture in use sufficient for the number of children? Score 5 if: all children who want to, can have a chair and sit at a table during eg. play periods and mealtimes.	5	4	3	2	1	
12 Are there areas available at some time during the day in which children can be alone although adults are near by? Score 5 if: there is at least one area in the nursery such as a playhouse or home corner, which been blocked off (e.g. with low shelving) from the main activity areas, where children can be without feeling under constant observation by adults.	5	4	3	2	1	

THE NURSERY	YES					NO
	5	4	3	2	1	NA
13 Is general equipment stored so that it does not interfere with children's play space? Score 5 if: beds, mats, furniture, toys etc., when not in use, are kept in cupboards, on shelves or otherwise out of the way, so that they do not in any way restrict children's physical activities or represent a danger or hazard.	5	4	3	2	1	
14 Are materials and equipment stored in a well-organised fashion? Score 5 if: equipment of the same type is stored together and/or equipment containers are labelled with pictures or words so that children know where materials can be found	5	4	3	2	1	
15 Are some materials and equipment arranged to allow easy access for children? Score 5 if: e.g. books are on low shelves, trays of fine motor equipment are within children's reach.	5	4	3	2	1	
16 Do children have the opportunity to use a variety of equipment materials to develop their skills/knowledge in this activity? Score 5 if: children have access to more than one type of toy/material during activity periods. For example, equipment such as bikes, push-along toys, climbing frame, etc for gross motor play; beads, puzzles, lego, activity boxes, etc for fine motor skills; a range of books, cups, funnels, jugs, spoons etc in sand/water play	5	4	3	2	1	
17 Is the equipment/material sufficient for the number of children? Score 5 if: all children who want to can have use of the equipment/materials at some time during the play period	5	4	3	2	1	
18 Does the equipment/material in use reflect features of a variety of cultures? Score 5 if: books, picture puzzles, card and board games, pretend play props (clothes, dolls, puppets, home corner items), etc., show people and events from a range of cultures. Musical instruments include examples from other cultures, eg maracas.						
19 Does the equipment/material in use portray adults and children in non-sexist roles? Score 5 if: books, games, work sheets, etc., include pictures or examples of people doing jobs or tasks not traditionally associated with their gender.	5	4	3	2	1	
20 Is the rest area favourable to resting? Score 5 if: when the children are resting, the area is quiet, not brightly lit, and neither too warm nor too cold. Children have no difficulties getting off to sleep should they want to.	5	4	3	2	1	
21 Is there adequate space for children to rest during nap times? Score 5 if: beds/mats are spaced such that children are not crowded together for naps, i.e. there is a space of at least two feet between each	5	4	3	2	1	
22 Is rest time supervised by an adult? Score 5 if: an adult stays with the children while they nap.	5	4	3	2	1	
23 Do children take naps/rest according to their needs? Score 5 if: children are encouraged to take naps/rests any time they feel tired and not necessarily all at the same time each day.	5	4	3	2	1	

THE NURSERY	YES					NO
	5	4	3	2	1	NA
OUTSIDE AREAS						
1 Is the play area checked for dangerous items before children go out? Score 5 if: staff look around for such things as broken glass and refuse that may have been thrown into the play area since last used.	5	4	3	2	1	
2 Are children allowed to stay indoors if they do not want to go outside? Score 5 if: adults allow children who say they do not want to go outside to remain indoors to play, read, etc.	5	4	3	2	1	
3 Is the sand pit covered when not in use? Score 5 if: a close fitting cover is placed around the sand pit that prevents cats etc. from entering it	5	4	3	2	1	
4 Is the outdoor space large enough for the number of children? Score 5 if: there are no obvious signs of overcrowding. Children can play on equipment and run about without getting in each other's way because of lack of space	5	4	3	2	1	

ICRU GROUP DAY CARE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST
4. Dealing with distress and discipline

DEALING WITH DISTRESS AND DISCIPLINE	YES					NO
	5	4	3	2	1	NA
1. Do adults respond straight away to a child who is upset or distressed?.	5	4	3	2	1	
2 Do adults respond to a distressed child in an appropriate way? Score 5 if: adult talk calmly, explain, hold, cuddle and listen to a distressed child.	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Do adults respond in a positive way to children engaging in undesirable behaviour? Score 5 if: e.g., a child is never simply reprimanded, he/she is redirected, encouraged to develop a new interest. Rules appear to be clear and easily understood. Good behaviour is reinforced. Threats are not made, children are not humiliated when they misbehave	5	4	3	2	1	
4 Are children helped to understand why their behaviour is undesirable? Score 5 if: children are not simply reprimanded; explanations and reasoning are also used, e.g., 'sit on your seat properly, because if you don't you may fall off and hurt yourself' 'keep the sand in the tub, if you pour it on the ground, you won't have any left in the tub to play with'.	5	4	3	2	1	
5. Do adults help children to negotiate solutions to problems with other children and model these skills appropriately? Score 5 if: adults help children to talk through situations and resolve problems conflicts such as children arguing between themselves; and they do this in a rational and calm way	5	4	3	2	1	
6. Do adults encourage children to talk about their feelings and frustrations? Score 5 if: when children show emotion such as anger, adult enquire and listen to explanations from the child as to why they feel like that.	5	4	3	2	1	
7. Are children encouraged to show empathy to one another in appropriate situations. Score 5 if: adults explain to children when and why others are e.g., upset, and give guidance on how to be supportive by e.g., giving cuddles, sharing toys, or respecting a child's wish to be left alone. Boys and girls are encouraged to be empathetic.	5	4	3	2	1	