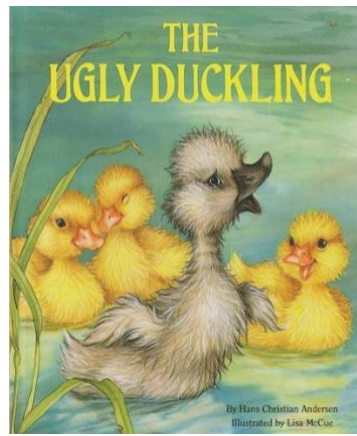


The Ugly Duckling

From hatching to small holding!

What happened when the children at Bowerdean Nursery fell in love with our hatchlings.



Case Study:

Y

- Y is one of our youngest learners.
- Y initially found the transition from home to Nursery distressing.
- Y can appear reluctant to leave Dad at drop off and requires some cajoling (either by his 2 preferred members of staff pretending to chase him or playing peek-a-boo).
- Y really liked his dummy or his bottle, but we have worked hard with Mum & Dad to support him not to bring these to Nursery.
- Y has some speech difficulties, which can make it tricky to understand what he is saying unless you are tuned in and understand the context.
- Y is keen to communicate but does not always have the words he needs.

Y has made strong progress since starting at Nursery, gaining confidence to leave Mum & Dad with a bit of encouragement, forming friendships with other children and with staff. He has shown he is a kind, gentle boy who is keen to please, listens carefully to instruction and enjoys learning.

However, the hatching of our ducklings has had an amazing and rapid impact on his emotional maturity and his language development.

- Y leaves Dad without any encouragement as he is excited to see the ducks. He even takes his bag without being asked!
- Mum reports that as soon as he gets up in the morning he asks to go to Nursery.
- Y always reminds his parents that he must take some food for Hattie the hen & the ducks, which he is keen to show the teacher on the gate in the morning.
- Y has happily accepted Dad's limit on the amount of food he brings in showing he can manage his feelings with growing maturity.
- Y's vocabulary has exploded - he is using 3-4 word sentences, including adjectives and verbs; e.g: 'ducks growing bigger, big!'
- Y's naturally expressive communication methods (lots of hand gestures, signs and facial expressions) have become even more animated, which is helping more staff understand what he is saying to them.
- Dad keenly supported Y's interest in the ducklings by the gate each morning. Together we modelled and extended Y's language through repetition, addition of new words and expansion of phrases, and parallel talk.



Observations:

Y loves our ducklings and their arrival has really boosted his confidence and language development.

Y took a little while to settle when he first started at Nursery and until the arrival of the ducklings, he would need some cajoling when leaving Dad at the gate. He would often hide behind him and would need one of his preferred adults to encourage him through the gate by playing games with him. However, since the ducklings have arrived Y confidently and happily leaves Dad and takes his bag without issue. Initially the ducklings were in a cage by the gate each morning so the children could see them, which was the first step in Y's growing independence. Even though now the ducklings are elsewhere in the garden, Y's enthusiasm continues and he walks straight through the gate, showing Mrs Staines the seeds he has brought for Hattie and the ducks.



Y loved ducks before our hatching project and his parents have supported this interest by frequently taking him to feed them in the local area. This interest has really helped him develop his problem solving skills and he has enthusiastically joined in all the activities linked to our ducks.



His collaborative play with older children has supported his language development. He understands questions such 'How can we fix our river?' and while his answers can be hard to decipher, his actions show he has some really good ideas (e.g. adding more bricks) and he can manipulate objects to fit together.



His 'have a go' attitude has really grown because he wants to engage in any duck related activities. This passion has led to an explosion in his ability to link words and to say them more clearly. Each morning by the duck cage, Dad has supported his language, along with Mrs Staines, using the same strategies as Mrs Staines - echoing words back, then extending with adjectives and talking out loud to themselves so Y has been able to pick up more vocabulary, which he is now trying to use at every opportunity.

Y has been actively seeking out any activity - creative, physical, mathematical or discovery, confidently exploring them either with children of his own age or his older peers.



Y's keenness and his language development enabled him to ask if he could come for a walk with the older children to see the wild ducks ('Me walk ducks too?'). He was amazing, listening carefully to instructions, following our walking rules and chatting non-stop about what he could see. Even though it was tricky to decipher his meaning, his willingness and desire to communicate was undeterred.

Y has also brought the ducks a special duck solar light, which he checks each day to make sure the ducks haven't knocked it over! We will use this passion and his parents enthusiasm for our ducklings to support him to develop the clarity of his speech further.

