Prompts for reflection: Learning to be with others

Anne: Hello, I'm Anne Stonehouse. Curriculum for very young children in education and care services includes interactions, conversations, and the provisions in the physical environment, as well as learning opportunities. Learning about how to be caring and respectful of others is one of the most important and complex areas of learning for children under three years. This vignette is about teaching children through responses to their inevitable unpleasant encounters, to learn how to be with others. As you view the vignette consider how Mel's ideas and actions demonstrate respect. To what extent does supporting children's learning rely on knowing them well? What are Mel's intentions? That is, what does she want children to learn?

Mel: Ouch, are you okay, Cam? My goodness, that didn't feel too good at all, I don't think.

Mel: It's not nice when people are rough, is it? No, I don't like them being rough either. Turn around, let me see. Ouch. I don't know about that either. You tell them next time to stop, okay? Because that wasn't something you enjoyed, was it? No.

Mel: Situations where children are being a bit more pushy to others than some would like, I find there's a few ways in which you can do it, and I think a bit of observation's really important in the actual time that it's happening. If there is a bit of a shove, and another child sort of looks back at the one who's done it, you can actually observe it first before jumping in because it would be nice to see if that other child can actually hold himself up, or respond in a certain way that will maybe help that learning without our interception, or without our assistance. If it's continuing and I'm seeing that the other child's not able to assert themselves in a situation, then I would prefer to go and support that child that it's happening to.

And if I feel, after observation, that the child who's doing all the pushing is enjoying something about it, or actually feeling they're getting a bit of attention out of it. Then I specifically turn more to the other child, but within earshot of the one who's there, and explain how I feel about the situation, and that, you know, we're very much there to look after them and we're going to support them and help them to, you know: maybe say 'stop' to the other person, or understand that you can walk further away if you like.

Mel: So I give them tools, and I think sometimes when I pay that attention elsewhere it's sort of not giving that person what they possibly want to have happen, or we talk about it a little bit later, and say, 'What was happening?' or 'What did you need to do that for?'

Mel: Just ask them what came out of it.

Mel: Because sometimes it's very interesting for the person who is pushing, actually why they've done it, and what was in their head, and it could be something very simple that could change their actions.