

Celebrating 20 years at Tanglewood

On 19 June, I attended the twentieth anniversary of the Speech and Language Centre (SLC) at Tanglewood Nursery School, Chelmsford, as part of the Giving Voice campaign. Opened in September 1993, Tanglewood was the first nursery SLC in Essex and only the fourth nationwide.

It was a wonderful opportunity to meet parents and carers of children who currently attend, as well as current and previous SLTs, nursery staff, previous pupils and their families, and senior representatives from Provide Community Interest Company.

According to Lauren Woodhead (highly-specialist SLT at Tanglewood), the centre was originally set up with funding from children's charity I CAN and in its first year provided eight



Celebrating 20 years at Tanglewood

places for pre-school children with severe and specific speech and language impairment. After the first year, the demand was so high, the number of places increased to 16.

“All of the staff involved in setting up the centre believed strongly in the ethos of integration. Therefore, the SLC was set up from the beginning as an integrated part

of the mainstream nursery at Tanglewood,” Lauren says.

Two years after the SLC opened, funding transferred to local authorities in Essex. The local education authority funded a full-time learning support assistant post and the local health authority funded a full-time SLT.

“Little has changed over the past 20 years, testament to the principles the centre was set up with originally. The centre still provides 16 places for pre-school children with severe and specific speech and language impairment, and continues to run as an integrated part of the mainstream nursery class,” Lauren adds.

“The demand for places remains high and it is ever more challenging in times of financial difficulties, but it remains an excellent provision and both staff and families feel incredibly privileged to be part of such a special place.”

.....
Vicky Harris, RCSLT Learning Development Manager