

Emma Paterson, Nursery Nurse Manager, Little Einstein's Arbroath

Name:

Emma Paterson

Job title:

Nursery nurse manager, Wonderland Arbroath Nursery (part of Little Einstein's Kindergarten Ltd)

Qualifications:

NVQ2, SVQ3, A1 unit assessor, and PDA (Professional Development Award). But it's an ongoing process, because particularly at manager level you find you have to keep pace with all of the new developments in the profession. You really never stop studying or learning.

Getting there:

I started out by gaining an apprentice position in Nottingham, from which I was able to gain my NVQ2 qualification by going block release to study over the course of a year. I then went to college to begin the next level of training, but when I moved to Scotland with my husband had to start that part over again. I was able to work at the Wonderland nursery and also study, through the New Deal scheme, and become a qualified nursery nurse.

After six months I was promoted to the deputy position, which obviously meant a great deal of extra responsibility, and was soon fully involved in all of the council-run first aid and other courses that go with the job.

I've now been with the nursery around ten years, and have been manager there for four years. It's a role which still continually throws up new challenges: when you're first appointed manager you immediately find you have all sorts of new responsibilities which reflect your new role – most obviously the supervision of staff.

As you progress into the job you certainly find all the new experiences a challenge – and you have a big role to play in both the annual inspections by the Care Commission and also the six-monthly quality assurance visits from the council.

And even although I've been doing the manager job for several years the job is never the 'same routine' from one week to another – for example this year we've had a high level of support needs children, who can be kids with anything from behavioural difficulties to medical conditions which need special attention: it has meant, for example, working in tandem with professional speech therapists and occupational therapists – and we've built a great relationship with the support team.

Best Bits:

The best part of the job is when you see that all the hard work – the studying, and the professional development side of things – has really paid off, and that your work really has made a difference where it matters most, and that the children are benefiting.

Last year we became part of the Little Einstein's nurseries group and the company has many far-reaching development plans which have already made a big difference to the way we can operate, so there are lots of positive things happening which will help us make our work still more rewarding.

Worst Bits:

My "worst bit" is simply finding at the end of the day that I could easily have done with at least another hour to manage all the things I wanted to get done – you constantly need more time, and an extra pair of arms would come in very handy!

There are around 55 children at the nursery on any particular given day, looked after by a staff of 14 – me included – but even so there is never any shortage of things to do.

Advice to others:

My main advice would be to get in as much practical experience as you possibly can, while of course planning how you aim to gain your qualifications. Apart from anything else real experience will soon tell you whether this is the job for you! If it is, you'll find it very rewarding, in return for a great deal of hard work – a career which really does give you terrific job satisfaction.