

Q Cath (researcher)
A Vanessa U (after-school club supervisor)

Q Okay, so I'm going to put the recording device there. This is, for the purposes of the recording, an interview with Vanessa, from the After School Club, I think it's called, at Beaconsfield Infants School. As you've had the information sheet, you understand that we're doing a study of the case-study child across different environments, and looking at how they interact with technology, how they use it in learning and play, at home, at school, and at community activities.

A Yes.

Q So, although the study's focusing on play with tech, if the After School Club doesn't have a huge amount of technology, it's not meant to in any way suggest that it should, just we're interested in the case-study child, in this case it's Harvey, in general. So, could you tell me a little bit about the group, what it does, and how it's funded?

A The after-school club group?

Q The after-school club, yes.

A So, it's funded by the school, but of course we charge the parents, so whatever we get charged obviously that comes into it as well. We feed them, so we have to fund the feeding, we have to fund of course activities, like making, and everything like that, so resources, just stocking up. But it's good that it's all school done, because then you can just use bits and bobs from the school.

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We also have the access of outside where there are the building areas and stuff. We have access to the hall, which is the building areas as well, and we have running around, kicking footballs and everything like that, which is good. We also have a classroom, if it's a rainy day, so then they can access classroom-based stuff as well.

Also, in every place we go we have a whiteboard, so they can do a little bit of technology. So, sometimes I get them to write on the whiteboard, or do a pretty picture, but they have to share the picture, so they all have to do a little bit at a time. Sometimes it's quite difficult, but they actually do enjoy it, and sometimes I'll put [unclear] on, and stuff like that, and they enjoy that.

Q And the club, how often does it run, is it an every evening thing?

A It's an every-evening thing. It runs from three o'clock till six o'clock, or three o'clock till five o'clock on Fridays.

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Q And how often does Harvey come to it?

A Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, not Thursday, and not Friday. So, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.

Q And you were saying about the use of technology and also media, like apps and things like that, in the group, and you were saying that you can use some of the school resources.

A Yes. We usually just use the whiteboard, so if they're really hectic we calm them down with calming music, or if they need something that's just on a bigger scale, they can do the whiteboard on the bigger scale, so then it's bigger for them. Also, it helps with turn taking, because they enjoy doing a little bit of a picture each. We've got a thing called, I think it's Snowflake, where they can play different games on there, and they enjoy doing that, and it's all about turn taking there, and working together, and puzzles, so we integrate that as well.

Q What other sort of things do you use, do you use anything that generates music, or have you got any iPads?

A We usually just use the whiteboard for music as well, we use YouTube, and the girls especially love Just Dance. Harvey likes Ghostbusters, the Ghostbusters' Just Dance. So, we put a lot of Just Dance on, especially if it's raining we do a lot of active stuff, because if you can imagine 30 kids in a hall for three hours, it's just chaotic. So, putting on some music and them dancing just fills it a little bit, and then if they're a bit hyper we put calm music on. They'll say, I want to hear the calm music, so you need to stay to that level as well, and they generally do that, as well.

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Q Does the club have the same sort of policy or same kind of approach towards the amount of technology or media that the children access as the rest of the school, is it tied in?

A Yes, it is tied in. But it's very hard to tie it in, because there are 30 children it's like a class, you can't get 30 laptops all around the room. So, we try to put technology in as much as possible, say the whiteboard, but obviously if you give them one iPad they'll all just want to go on that iPad, so it's all about sharing, so we think the best policy is to have the whiteboard.

Q Right okay, so no individual devices, or anything like that.

A No, because what we've found, especially if we went into a classroom and said, you can use the laptops, what we've found is that they will squabble over the laptops, and they will say, I want a go, I want a go on them. And then you're trying to do the five-minute timer, and then somebody switches the timer over, and they're a bit sneaky about it, so we try to do it on a big interactive whiteboard so most kids can join in, so then it's fair.

Q So, you've mentioned a couple of aims of using the technology, which is to calm the children down, I think you mentioned, and also to get them moving, and keep them interested. Are there any other kind of uses, do you show films, or play [unclear]?

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A We do show films. So, at the moment, it's Christmas, so we show Christmas films.

Q What sort of things have you been showing?

A The Nativity, because obviously our school play is coming up, so the Nativity is quite cute because it shows that the kids get nervous and stuff like that. So, it's nice for them to actually feel like, oh, I actually did feel like that, but oh, okay, and it looks really good on the day. And that's what we keep telling them.

Q Ah, that's really nice, so they're learning from watching a film. So, if there was any kind of technologies or media that you'd use if you had the chance, in the club, is there anything you would like? And I suppose we're looking at, not just apps and websites, but things like robotics, or coding, or anything like that. Do you ever do any of that, or have you, or would you want to?

A I would love to do a bit more robotics, I'd love for them to make more... Because they do like the LEGO, they like the building.

Q You've got quite a lot of LEGO at the club, have you?

A Yes, we've got quite a lot of LEGO, got quite a lot of big wooden bricks, and train track, and they love just doing that, especially the boys. And I'd love to get robotics in there, but obviously it's just money, we haven't got the money to have stuff like that.

Q What do you think they get out of something like that?

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A I think the boys especially would concentrate more. With LEGO and stuff, they're fixated on making something, and they like playing with it, but then sometimes it breaks, the LEGO, or sometimes the bricks fall down, and then they all get a little bit like, ooh! So, then it's like, okay, just rebuild it. So, a robot, or something like that, that they could personally say, this is my robot, we could do this with it, would be quite nice, I would like that. I'd like some decoding as well, that would be really good for them.

Q Do they do coding in lessons at school?

A They do, yes. But we don't do it in after-school club.

Q Do you know what kind they use, do they use Python, or do they use Scratch, or...?

A I don't know, but I do know they do it. They might do it on Purple Mash.

Q Oh right, yes. So, if you'd like to do something like that, do you encounter any barriers to bringing in more technology into the club, either that policy...?

A Because of the money.

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Q Money? Right.

A Yes, because the money would be a big issue. But like I say, we use everything around the school that we've got, which we're quite lucky we've got quite a bit of stuff, but obviously technology costs a bit more than just getting some bricks.

Q Are there any other uses of tech or media in the club that you can think of? I think we've touched on films and things. Do you use it for admin purposes, do the children have their own profile, is it connected to the school system?

A Yes, we do use it for admin, we use it for their bill. So, to bill them, their invoices, we use it to form the register. And then also, which we've just started doing, on Purple Mash there's a graph, and we get them to vote on what snack they would like, and what they would like to do, and they count. So, say four people wanted jam, five people wanted honey, we do it either as a bar chart or a line graph, so they're looking at different sorts of graphs, and they find that really cool.

And then we add up all the people that have got them, and then we get the total, and then we have to count the number of people and think have we got enough sandwiches for all these people. And there's usually one kid that hasn't voted, but we're going to get there. We're going to get there, it's progress.

Q Talking about Harvey, specifically, what does he tend to use, what's on offer? Does he enjoy when you use the whiteboard, for example, is he attracted to certain construction toys?

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A He likes the big bricks, will like the LEGO, he likes the whiteboard, and he does like dressing up and playing a different role to him, which is quite nice to see.

Q What are his interests when he does dressing-up and things like that?

A Mainly filming, I want to say fight scenes, but they're not really fight scenes. They're like superhero scenes, like if they went, POW! and someone would fall dramatically, he likes doing that.

Q Do they do it in slow motion?

A Yes, they do it in slow motion.

Q Oh, that's amazing.

A We've got a director's film cut as well, so somebody will use the director's thing, and say...

Q Oh, like the clapperboard thing?

A Yes, and then they'll say, Action! And then they'll go, Cut! And then they'll go onto a different scene, so they make their own kind of world up, which is quite nice.

Q That's really amazing. Have they ever been able to film it, or have you ever been able to film it?

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A No, because it's quite busy [?]. But I would like to do that, and film it, and get it into a film scenario.

Q That's really interesting. So, what about things like the LEGO, and things like that, is he...?

A He loves the LEGO, he loves the building bricks; they make quite a lot of stuff with the bricks and LEGO.

Q What sort of things do you think he is attracted towards making?

A He likes making spaceships, he likes making... I'll tell you what he made, because he's in my breakfast club as well, we use little wooden bricks, and he made his own board game. It was really cute, it was out of little bricks, just like that. He made his own board game, and then he explained it to all the rest of the breakfast club, and then he said, look, guys, do you want to play it all together? And it was amazing, it was really good.

Also, the fact that I felt really guilty for saying, right, it's time to go to school now, you'll have to break it up. It was massive as well, and he explained it to everyone of how it was going to work, he let everybody else touch it, and it was a really nice interactive game, thoroughly really amazing.

Q That's really quite amazing. And he was using it as a way to invite people to play it.

A Yes, he was. It was really amazing.

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Q We're interested in understanding how these sorts of play with technology, and with media, the awareness of the films, and the games, and the superheroes, and things like that, might develop skills and knowledge for Harvey. Can you think of any examples relating to specific skills that you could relate perhaps to his use of technology, or his awareness of media? Things like emotional skills, or social, or physical, something like that.

A I definitely would say it's emotional, because when we were watching the Nativity, the film, he was saying, oh, I felt like that, and now I feel like this, and Mum says it's going to be all right on the day. So, obviously he's took that in, watched it, and seen that, so I think emotionally he definitely gets a lot out of it.

I think with the whiteboard, when we have the whiteboard in the after-school club, once he's told you need to be fair, and share, he then follows that rule down to a T, so then he'll tell everybody else, you need to wait your turn, you need to do this, you need to do that. So, I think it's quite good for him. I think it's quite good.

Q What about creatively as well, do you see any impact on those...?

A Yes. At first, he goes from a little structure, then he'll create a whole land.

Q And this would be with LEGO, or with bricks?

A Anything. Anything and everything. Anything creative, I've noticed he starts off really little, and then it'll grow into a big world. And I think it's quite good because he thinks of loads of original ideas, say a spaceship, and then he'll start thinking about things to go on the spaceship, or to go in the spaceship, and it just brings out more creative thinking.

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Q I think that was like that time when I observed him outside, and he and the group together they were building that incredible spaceship, and then he was persisting with it and finding bits, he said these are lights, these are lasers, that type of thing. So, do you ever play with him when he's at after-school club?

A I play with him at after-school club and at breakfast club.

Q What kind of role do you think you take, are you a co-player, do you make suggestions? Can you give an example of a specific game you might have played with him, and your role in it?

A I would say I'm, and I don't want to sound big-headed, a little bit like a role model, because he does like to play by himself. When he's creating things, or something, he does like to be on his own to think about it and let his mind work the way it does.

But then I'll say a little tip to him, like, ooh, we could do that though, and then he'll go, oh yes, and then he'll just go off on that tangent and make it bigger and make it better. So, I think I just give him advice, really. He likes reading with me in the morning, sometimes. He'll come in, and if there's nobody else at breakfast club he'll come in and read with me.

Q So, is reading aloud something he likes to do?

A Yes, and he especially likes dinosaur or animal books.

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Q Oh right, so you get a sense of his special interest. Is there any tech, or media, or toys, that work particularly well for him, and do you know why that might be? Anything that works particularly well, that seems to...

A I would just say construction in general, but I would say large construction is a lot better, so then he can get stuck in more. So, say if he's building a car, or something, he can actually sit in it, and then go, oh, we need this, oh, we need that. So, something big and to get stuck into.

Q And is he more likely to play alone or to play in a group, from what you've seen?

A He starts off playing alone, and then he likes getting into a group and getting them all involved, I think that's the sort of thing. Because I think he gets into his head what he wants to build straightaway, and as soon as people come and join him, he's like, oh, I'm doing this, can you come and do this, so I think, yes, that's how his mind works.

Q Can you see any kind of influences that he brings from other parts of his life, like home, or school, to after-school club, that might influence the way that he plays with the technology, or with media, or with the bricks? I think we touched on animals as a special interest, but can you see any other everyday life experiences that he channels through what he does?

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A I know when he's been told off he's especially like, oh, I need to do this, so then he tells other people. So, because he's been told off, then he realises it's wrong, and then he has to vocalise to other people, oh no, you don't do that. That's the only thing I can think of, really.

Q If you are initiating a game or anything with Harvey, are you more likely to use technology, or construction items, or less likely, to steer him in that direction?

A I would steer him in constructive.

Q You would?

A Yes, because it allows him to be creative in a good way, and he concentrates so much more than if you tell him to read a book, or anything like that. It's very interesting, actually. So, on I think it's Monday breakfast club, it'll be a very calm group, and it'll be very small, it'll be like six children, where we usually have 11. And it's mostly girls, and they all like sitting round and doing the colouring, and everything like that. And you can see that Harvey just can't sit down and colour; he does everything but that.

So, he'll walk around, he'll get a book, and he'll go, oh guys, look at this, and try to get them interacting with him. And they just won't want to know, they'll just want to be colouring still, and you can see him thinking, oh, why can't one of you just play with me. And I'll put some LEGO out, and as soon as he gets the LEGO out he's like, okay, but I want somebody else to come and join me.

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And you can see him thinking, how am I going to get someone to join me, how am I going to get someone to do it. And the girls are just interested in colouring. It's very interesting to see on a Monday morning. It's very interesting to see.

Q Yes, it sounds it. When he's done something he's particularly happy with or satisfied with, how does he express it, just out of interest?

A He'll show an adult, he wants the adult to be impressed.

Q Right, okay. Just moving on then, just some questions about your own views, your own perceptions of technology and media, and how you reach the thoughts that you do. Do you think technology or media are positive or negative for children at the club, an activity? And which ones do you think are positive or negative, and why?

A I think definitely positive for what we use it for. So, the calming music, it definitely calms them down. At the moment, it's Christmas-themed, so I put a

Christmas tree on, with Christmas music, not even singing Christmas music, just instrumental, and it just really brings them down. I think the whiteboard, using it to colour, and everything like that, taking turns, it's definitely got a lot better and they've definitely been a lot calmer with that.

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And they know because it's going to be on quite a few days a week, they know that that's like, oh, I don't need to fight to get into it, because they're going to have a turn eventually. I also think, with the Just Dance, especially when it's raining, when they can't get outside, just that little bit of energy is definitely a winner for after-school club, because they need to let out that energy.

Q What kind of songs does Just Dance play?

A Recent music, old music. At the moment, it's the Christmas play, so we're doing the dances from the Christmas play, and they love doing that because it's not just their dance, they can learn everybody else's dance. They love that, and Harvey likes that as well.

Q How important do you think technologies or media are for children generally, or do you have any concerns about their experiences with technology?

A At school I think it's fine, because we don't use it all the time. It is accessible all the time, but the children don't access it all the time. I think at home we just need to be careful how much we're using it, and how much we're giving our kids access to the internet, and what they're doing on it. Also, with this little child in green, he's obsessed with it, so we have to kind of cap him, and say, look, you're only having five minutes on the iPad a day, because he's that obsessed with it. But apart from that, I think it's a positive thing.

Q What do you think is most positive about it?

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A Just that it shows a different way of learning. If they can't access it via just a book, they could have a book that's interactive on the iPad, and I think that's a lot better. Also, I used to... Is this my own personal...?

Q Yes, absolutely.

A Two years ago I had a child that can't speak, so we trained the iPad to speak for him, and it was a lovely way of communicating, and you saw his attitude change quite quickly. He went from being this little boy that hadn't got a voice, to someone who could press a button and actually get to know what you say, and it was lovely then [?].

Q So, do you have any concerns about safety aspects of either toys which can connect up to the internet, so things like robotics, or Furbies, or things like that, or data privacy more generally, in relation to children? What sort of worries might you have?

A At school I think it's pretty safe, because I think we've got it nailed, we've got a

really good IT person, we block those websites that are not great, we also block some that we need, it's blocked. At school we do it pretty well. I think robotics linking up to the internet, I think that should be banned. I just think it's the worry at home, that you just need to make sure that everything's a bit safe for your children.

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Q What do you think could the risks be? Working with children, what are you most aware of?

A Just that if you leave them with a laptop on their own then they might be able to get on something that you don't want them to be on. Like, even the news, just click onto the news, you just wouldn't want them to see some stuff that's in the news.

Q So, it's like age-appropriate sort of stuff, is that right?

A Yes.

Q How important is technology for you, or media for you?

A I'm on all social media, and everything like that. I'm not obsessed with it, I wouldn't say, because I go from six o'clock here to six o'clock at night, and I don't check my phone at all.

Q Is that part of a school policy?

A No, I just don't check it, I just don't see the point of checking it at school. But then people get annoyed with me because I don't email them back, like you, because that's when I missed your message. I was like, oh no, I can't believe we've missed the message. I'm so sorry.

Q I was definitely not annoyed, [unclear].

A But yes, I guess when I go back home I do check the social media. I check it, and then I go to bed. I'm not that obsessed with it, really. I think I'm more obsessed with the Fitbit, the Fitbit element of that, because I like to see how many steps I've done a day. I like to do 20,000 per day, and I like to check it on my phone, see what my heart rate is like, and stuff like that, I think I'm more into that than social media.

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Q Do you think that children's use of technology or media, the access to media and things like apps, and things like that, or their use of technology in their day-to-day lives, do you think it could impact on their lives, either positively or negatively? Or maybe even interfere in some way with their lives? Either positively or negatively, again.

A I don't think so, because I think media is getting a lot bigger in every sense, you see it everywhere now. You see it on buildings, because it just used to be in New York with the big screens, now it's London, I think we're getting it a lot more everywhere. So, I think it's going to happen, whether it's going to happen young

or old, people are going to get obsessed, because you get new phones, you get good tablets now, it's really good.

So, I think growing up in this age you're going to have technology like that, and kids are going to want to go on it because it's amazing, it's exciting, it's good. Whereas I think because my generation have it, I'm not that bothered about it that much.

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Q So, you think there's like a generation gap between the people who didn't maybe grow up with it, and people who...

A Yes, I do.

Q And how do you see that?

A Well, I can tell especially, because me and my friends were all not bothered about our phones really, we're not really that precious about our phones. On a night out, you don't really see us on our phones, we like to socialise and talk. Whereas you see people out and about now, on their phones, and they're just obsessed with it, they've got it in their hand all the time, and you think, just put it down and have a conversation.

You see them in pubs and stuff, everyone's on their phone, not talking. Put your phones down and just have a conversation. And you see it more with the younger generation than you do with the older generation.

Q Can I ask how old you are?

A 24. Nearly 25.

Q So, when you say younger generation, how old is that sort of age group?

A I would say 15 or 16, just when the technologies started coming out, like flip phones, and everything like that. Because I didn't get a phone till I was 14, 15, and I wasn't really that bothered about a phone anyway, it was just because I'd started going to [Shopping mall] [?], and I thought it was a big grown-up thing, and my mum got a bit worried about me. So, I had to have a phone, and I wasn't really bothered about it.

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Q Can I just ask as well about the club, does the club have a Facebook, or anything like that, is there a way that parents or supporters of the club can check in on [unclear]?

A No. We do have a book, it's like a little photo book and it just says what we've been doing, and special things we do. So, if we're doing baking, or if they've made one large model all together, we'll take a picture of it and say, this is what they do in the club, so it's just like a book that we show. We don't have a social media page; we do on the school, but nothing really goes out about after-school club.

Q Do you ever use Twitter, or anything like that?

A We do, but it's a school-based one. It's not an after-school club-based one.

Q Right, okay, so it's connected to the main school Twitter account. Okay, just a final few questions, which are about the link between technology and media, and children's emotions and wellbeing. As we talked earlier about using the whiteboard for soothing, and things like that, have you got any other thoughts about the relationship between technology and emotions, or emotional wellbeing in relation to young people?

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A Is this just in general, or in school?

Q In general. You can draw on examples in school, if you like, that would be really helpful.

A So, I think that it does change your mood sometimes. So, younger kids, I think it's really good for music. I think it's really good for music, just either getting them active, getting them to calm down, calming, I think it's very good for that. But I also do think that as you get older there's a lot of social media that just drags you down, I really do.

Q What sort of things?

A Just Twitter and everything. You see celebrities really skinny, and I just think it's not a good impact, it's just not good for, well, not young children, teenagers. I just think it drags them down, to think, oh, I should be a bit more skinny, oh I should be like this, oh I should be like that.

Q Do you ever see that kind of effect at primary level, anything that might be...?

A I don't know, because I only do infants. I definitely don't see it around infant school kids.

Q Speaking of the infant school kids that you work with, what kind of play is likely to lead to expressions of enjoyment? Play with technology, compared to maybe play with toys or games in general. Do they evoke different emotions, do you think, technology, or...?

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A No, I think they're the same emotions as you would playing LEGO. I think they really enjoy LEGO because you can touch it, you can feel it, you can build it, I think having LEGO and building blocks are just brilliant. I think it's the same with technology, they like it.

Q What do you see them react to, and how are they reacting?

A I think they react more to building and playing than they do to the whiteboard. I feel like they get a bit bored with the whiteboard for a few minutes, and then they go off and want to do something different.

Q I was going to say, what do they get bored with quickly compared with...?

A They get bored with the whiteboard because they think, oh, I've done that now, I'll go onto something where I can actually make something or be a superhero character. Or snack.

Q As you run a club which involves a lot of group play, from what I saw with my observations and stuff, can you think of what types of technology you think might lead to more social play, in your view?

A Something like the Beebots, do you know the ones that you can send different directions, and stuff like that? That would be nice to have sometimes.

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Q I don't think I know Beebots, can you just tell me a little bit more about Beebots?

A So, you tell it to go one way, so you can either tell it to go forwards, or right, left, or whatever, and you press it how many times you want it to do that, it's like a little mini robot. We have them in school, but we don't have many of them, and something like that would be lovely to have.

Q How is that a kind of social play?

A Because then they have a little map as well, so the kids could say, can we go from the shops to the bus stop, and then they could all talk together on how they're going to do it.

Q So, it's problem-solving.

A Problem-solving, yes.

Q Ah, that's really interesting. And finally, do you have any further thoughts that you'd like to share in general, based on what we've been talking about?

A No, not really. I think media is important now, because we're growing up with it. It's the time where it's going to get bigger, better, there are going to be more things for kids that are interactive, and we just need to move with the times.

Q Okay. Thank you ever so much, that's brilliant. Thank you.

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