



STREET LANE
NURSERY

TAKING PREMIUM TO PRE-SCHOOL

CLIENT: 22 STREET LANE NURSERY
DESIGN CONSULTANCY: ELMWOOD
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elmwood

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leeds-based entrepreneur Simon Pollard and his wife, Caroline, have three children, all of whom have attended nursery. While they were more than pleased with the childcare they'd received, they felt something was missing in the integration between nursery and home life, and that there was an opportunity begging to take nursery care to the next level.

Their concept was based around providing a premium level of care across all aspects of nursery care. They had found the perfect premises to convert into a state of the art building with fantastic outside space and access to the largest urban park in the UK, Roundhay. But with no background in early years education, it was essential to build a brand that would attract the very best staff, as well as the parents who were willing to pay a premium for their childcare.

In partnership with the couple, Elmwood came up with a brand positioning of 'Play, Discovery and Growth'. Taking cues from luxury and resort brands, the brand design informed the thinking for how the nursery services would be brought to life – across everything from spa-style staff uniforms and wooden toys for the children, to the colour palettes and names for the room settings. The brand design and concept has formed the strong foundation from which 22 Street Lane's continued success has grown.



“

I was blown away with how amazing 22 Street Lane Nursery is, the best I have ever seen.”

Ofsted Inspector

22 Street Lane is a truly premium and differentiated nursery brand that encompasses nature, nurture and quality, and the founders have been thrilled with the results:

- Based on the branding alone, 650 parents signed their children up for placements before the nursery had even opened up its books.
- Within a month of the waiting list going live, the nursery had converted interest to achieve 85% capacity, and became completely full within seven months. There is now a full waiting list with secured deposits up until 2021, as parents are desperate to obtain a place for their child.
- The nursery received 1,400 applications for 36 staff vacancies on commencing its recruitment process, before it was even built.
- The investment in the building and set up costs has been recouped in two and a half years – six months earlier than anticipated.
- Its success has led to a new weekend club for 55 children, which could return an extra £500k on the already established £1.45M annual turnover.

But most importantly, 22 Street Lane was awarded an outstanding by Ofsted, on its first inspection, which very rarely happens.

BASED ON THE BRANDING ALONE

650 PARENTS

SIGNED THEIR CHILDREN UP FOR PLACEMENTS BEFORE THE NURSERY HAD EVEN OPENED UP ITS BOOKS. THE NURSERY WAS

FULL WITHIN 7 MONTHS

AND NOW HAS A FULL WAITING LIST WITH SECURED DEPOSITS, THROUGH TO 2021



OUTLINE OF BRIEF



THE CHALLENGE

Simon and Caroline Pollard wanted to create a next-level nursery, not only to provide the best possible quality of care and education for young children, but to raise the bar in terms of standards. To encourage and support each child in all areas of their development, creating individuals who are confident, prepared for their later stages of education, and who are capable of creating their own futures.

Their concept was based around providing a premium level of care across all aspects of the nursery, supporting individual learning needs to ensure every child reaches their full potential, while also providing a fun and engaging experience.

They had found premises in the perfect location in Leeds, but with no background in early years education, it was essential that they built a brand that would attract the very best staff and parents willing to pay a premium for their childcare. And also create an environment in keeping with their aspirational nursery concept.

OBJECTIVES

Simon and Caroline approached Elmwood with a view to helping them achieve three key objectives:

1.

Create a differentiated and aspirational brand for which parents were willing to pay a premium

2.

Achieve an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating

3.

Attract enough business to pay back the investment in the premises over a 3-year period

SCOPE & DEVELOPMENT OF BRIEF

Elmwood was asked to create a brand identity that was aspirational, reflecting the new nursery concept. But echoing the couple's approach to childcare, we wanted to ensure that the staff at the nursery was equipped with the right skills and tools to make sure they could live and breathe the brand every day. So, the work also involved creating brand assets that the team could use, and also working with Simon, Caroline and the team to bring the brand to life across the nursery environment.

STRATEGIC THINKING

The couple had a clear vision for the nursery, and wanted to incorporate the location into the name, and to highlight its proximity to nature and Roundhay Park with a premium and aspirational brand. The agency worked with them to refine and tighten this vision and establish a distinct point of view for the brand on which to base the creative brief. This led to a brand positioning that was centred on 'Play, Discovery and Growth'.



DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Street Lane is one of the most iconic and desirable streets, situated in an affluent and attractive area of Leeds. It is synonymous with quality, and expectation for any business start-up is high. Lined with grand Victorian villas and terraces, high-end jewellers, tailors, boutique shops and popular restaurants, it's also home to one of the UK's finest green spaces, and the largest urban park in the UK, Roundhay.

22 Street Lane had lain empty for 15 years – an old medical practice, it had deteriorated into an unwelcome eyesore. The building had decayed so badly that it was in need of some serious inspiration. As a result, the local council were in desperate need of some creativity in keeping with the local surroundings.

At the same time, local entrepreneur Simon Pollard and his wife, Caroline, had put three children through nursery. While they were more than pleased with the childcare they received and their children were happy, they felt that something was missing in the integration between nursery and home life. The entrepreneurial mindset kicked in, and the couple found themselves thinking about how to create a next-level nursery, and what they would want to do at nursery if they were kids.

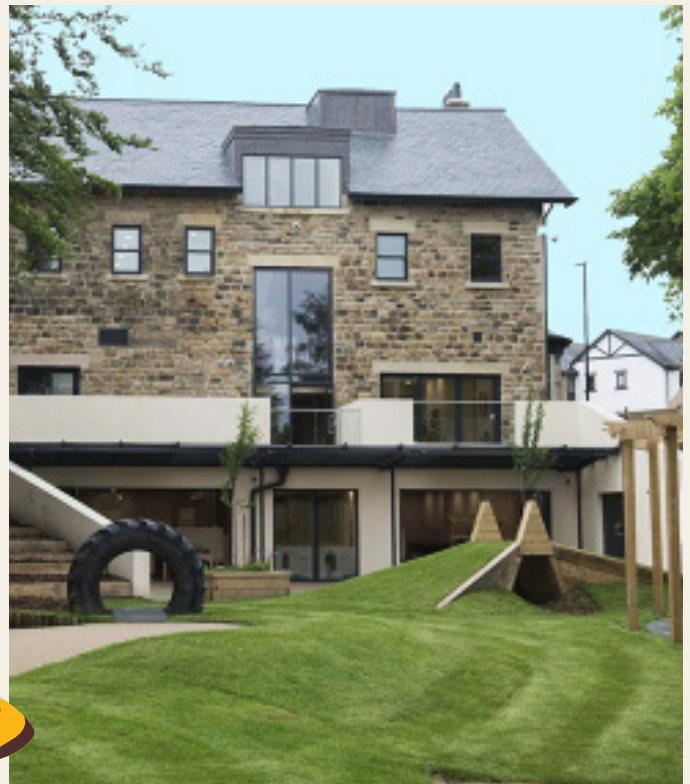
Passing the derelict property every day, they decided to go for it, purchased the property and quickly submitted planning permission to convert it into a state-of-the-art nursery.

The proposed conversion was to see the nursery extend over 4 floors with a full-building height window at the back of the property to flood light inside and showcase the planned large rear garden and outside space. Rooms on the lower levels open straight onto the gardens – giving children easy access to outdoor play, regardless of the weather.

With the premises bought and the concept developing day-by-day, the couple sought Elmwood's expertise to help bring their vision to life.



The derelict building...



... and the new fantastic building complete with outside space.



DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)



ABOUT 22 STREET LANE NURSERY

22 Street Lane Nursery is a children's nursery offering an exceptional learning experience for up to 91 children aged from one month to five years. It is situated on one of the most affluent streets in Leeds, next to Roundhay Park, and is dedicated to raising the standards amongst nursery practitioners.

Creativity and nature are at the core of its curriculum, which is centred on the natural desires of children to explore and learn through play. Classes include dance, cooking and languages, as well as yoga, and forest school. Every month the children learn about a different culture, and they regularly visit the local nursing home and get involved in the local community. They keep chickens and grow plants in the allotment, and children recycle all of their own waste as part of the nursery's commitment to achieve zero landfill waste.



DESIGN SOLUTION AND SCOPE OF WORK

The name was an important part of setting the level of desirability. Street Lane itself is a landmark street in Leeds, synonymous with quality, so it made perfect sense to actually include it in the name, 22 Street Lane, which happened to be its address.

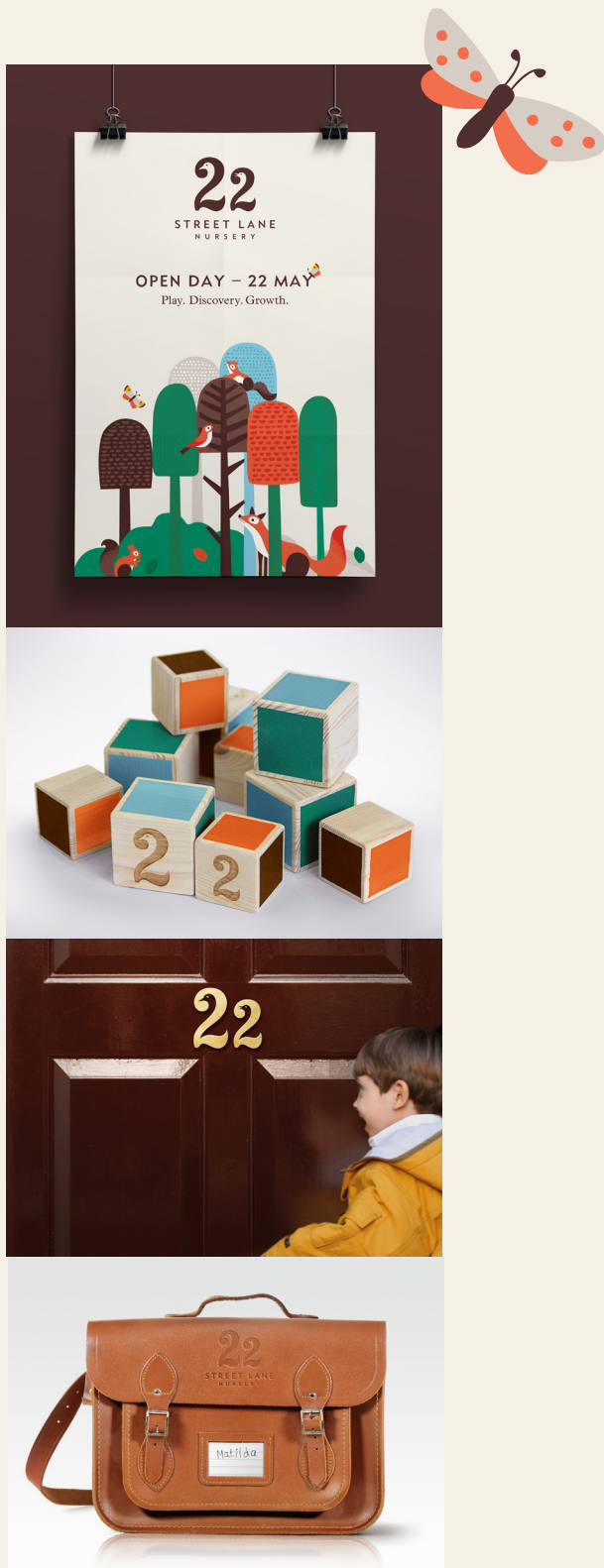
Drawing on the positioning of 'Play. Discovery. Growth', discovery is the driving force for the brand identity itself, which was refined by a specialist typographer. The swans hidden in the marque not only reflect the famous swans from Roundhay Park and the nursery's proximity to nature, but also the close bond between the students and 22 Street Lane staff.

Creating distance from other nurseries, 22 Street Lane Nursery turns its back on primary-coloured plastic and childish graphics, and instead takes its cues from luxury and resort branding to appeal to a more discerning clientele and their children.

Resort and luxury brands are synonymous with premium, high quality service. In keeping with the vision for 22 Street Lane and its exceptional standards, the brand informed the thinking for how the services would be brought to life – across everything from spa-style staff uniforms and wooden toys for the children, to the colour palettes and names for the room settings – chicklets, ducklings, goslings, cygnets and swans.

The end result is a brand world that encompasses nature, nurture and quality.

DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)



KEY FACTS

Project launch date: May 2016

Design fees: £30k + illustrator & typographer

COLLABORATION

Elmwood worked with a world-renowned typographer to optimise the craft and legibility of the final brand marque, as it was essential that the brand be imbued with impeccable craft values.

An illustrator was also involved to create assets that captured the essence of the nursery offer and built the brand profile, while portraying the spirit of Roundhay and its beautiful surroundings. The illustrations, which were also used as murals within the nursery, provided a contemporary colour palette that would support the master brand. They also served to extend the brand world and added pace across social media and communications.

MARKET OVERVIEW

According to healthcare research and intelligence specialist Laing Buisson, in 2015/16, the value of day nurseries in the UK was £5.3bn, up from £4.9bn for 2013/14 in the 2014 report (Nursery World, 2018). Having experienced a significant decline during the recession from 2008-2012, the nursery sector has seen a five-year growth rate of 3.9%. This upward trend has occurred as more parents seek employment in times of relative financial struggle, driving demand for nursery places for children aged five and under.

There is a proliferation of small nursery operators, due to parents' desire for smaller settings close to home, but all day nurseries are registered with Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) and can be run by private individuals, community groups, Montessori organisations, commercial businesses or by employers.

Childcare insurance specialist, Morton Michel, says the price of childcare has risen across the board over the past few years, and the government's introduction of schemes to make childcare more affordable for parents, such as the 30 hours free childcare, has helped nursery operators to attract greater numbers of customers. Due to often limited resources, nurseries tend to rely on word of mouth to attract the majority of their customers.

At the time of the conception of 22 Street Lane, there were approximately four other nurseries locally that were considered high standard, charging between £55-59 per day (the average day rate for a nursery in Leeds is £39). All of them had plenty of vacant places.

Because 22 Street Lane wanted to raise the bar, that obviously meant the price too, and therefore set its day rate at £69. So, in effect it was setting itself out as more expensive in an environment where there were already plenty of free spaces and an ultimate intake that lay within a 7-mile radius.

Therefore it was key for the branding to convey why 22 Street Lane was worth paying more for.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST OBJECTIVES

1.

CREATE A DIFFERENTIATED AND ASPIRATIONAL BRAND FOR WHICH PARENTS WERE WILLING TO PAY A PREMIUM

The building works had been carried out behind a façade over an eight-month period, but in the autumn before 22 Street Lane Nursery opened for business the brand came into its own. On Bonfire Night, Roundhay Park hosts the biggest bonfire in Leeds. Knowing that 70,000 people would be descending on the area, 22 Street Lane placed a branded hoarding outside.

As a result, 650 parents signed their children up for placements before the nursery had even opened up its books.

And within a month of this initial promotion and its waiting list going live, the nursery had converted that interest to achieve 85% capacity – something they had not expected, given the local competition and other nurseries in the area having vacancies.

The nursery was full after just seven months. This could have been achieved before then, but the pre-school room took longest to fill due to parents not wanting to switch their children from their current providers so close to starting school.

Additionally, 22 Street Lane now has a full waiting list with secured deposits, through to 2021. This is proof that for these parents, paying a premium isn't a problem when their expectations from the brand, have not only been met, but also exceeded.

It was summed up nicely at the nursery's second birthday by this parent:

“

**Wow 2 years already!
I miss collecting my daughter
from here and even more gutted
I can't get my little boy in”**



**HERE ARE JUST SOME
OF THE COMMENTS
RECEIVED FROM
PARENTS:**

**“22 Street Lane is
setting the bar for
what childcare and
education should
be like. Hats off to
everyone involved
in this project!
Looking forward
to getting started.”**

**“Soon to be a market
leader, the attention
to detail is beyond
measure.”**

**“The attention to
detail and planning
that looks to have
gone in to this
nursery is precision
at its best!”**

**“Delivering childcare
beyond anything
ever seen or
experienced before.
Simply awesome.”**



2.

ACHIEVE AN 'OUTSTANDING' OFSTED RATING

In order to achieve an outstanding rating from Ofsted, 22 Street Lane needed to recruit the very best talent.

On starting its initial recruitment process, the nursery received a staggering 1,400 CVs for just 36 local vacancies, again from the branding alone. It was in a position to cherry pick and employ the very best candidates with most holding 1st Class Honours Degrees in Childcare.

The nursery prides itself in its staff development to maintain and continually raise its standards, which is so important in maintaining a premium brand and is central to 22 Street Lane's positioning of 'Play. Discovery. Growth.' It holds staff training days every quarter, and has achieved Millie's Mark accreditation – which can only be achieved if 100% of employees are trained in paediatric first aid and they can demonstrate that the training will not be forgotten.

And the hard work is paying off. In August 2018 – just two years after opening and on its first inspection, 22 Street Lane achieved outstanding in all areas of review. The Ofsted Inspector said:

“

I was blown away with how amazing 22 Street Lane Nursery is, the best I have ever seen. I have 25 years experience in education and been an Ofsted Inspector for over four years, doing three inspections a week and have only ever given out 4 'Outstanding Judgements', none of which were to a new setting. You ought to take great pride in what has been achieved, the staff are truly amazing, from Apprentices to the Senior team, their knowledge, work ethic and professionalism are on a different level whilst the general ethos being centred around the children, it's just amazing.”



PERFORMANCE AGAINST OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

3.

ATTRACT ENOUGH BUSINESS TO PAY BACK THE INVESTMENT IN THE PREMISES OVER A 3-YEAR PERIOD

After putting together a considered business plan, Simon and Caroline invested £1.8m in the building at 22 Street Lane, not only to buy the property, but also renovate it into a state-of the-art nursery in keeping with its high-end concept. It was expected to pay back the investment over a three-year period.

The nursery has done so well that it has recouped that investment and paid for itself within two and a half years, and is currently turning over £1.45m, with a full waiting list up until 2021.

Given 22 Street Lane's continued success, the owners have set up a new weekend club. The supporting business plan for which underwrites an additional £500,000 in annual turnover through facilitating up to 55 children.

And it has also picked up a few creative awards...

GOLD

GRAPHIS BRANDING

SILVER

GRAPHIS LOGO DESIGN

SILVER

GRAPHIS DESIGN ANNUAL

SILVER

ROSES

NOMINATION

DRUM DESIGN

CERTIFICATE FOR
OUTSTANDING CREATIVITY

MOBIUS

SCALE OF EFFECT & BREADTH OF IMPACT

The award-winning brand design has had a huge effect on the business both inside and out. Internally, the positioning has been a barometer for everything the nursery does and the brand has been a flag to rally around – being the symbol of the standard the nursery wants to create every day. Even the noticeboards in the rooms and around the nursery are on brand.

Not only is 22 Street Lane the best nursery the Ofsted inspector has ever seen, but parents from the local area are desperate to get their child a place on the waiting list, which continues to grow each and every week despite there being no available places until 2021.

Consolidation from a number of multinational and national players has seen a number of local competitors consumed since the inception of 22 Street Lane as they have struggled to up their games and compete with what is an extremely strong offering driven by a powerful brand.

The brand design and concept formed the strong foundation from which 22 Street Lane's continued success has grown.



OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

22 Street Lane relied purely on the brand and the assets that its agency created for its marketing. There was social media activity across Facebook and Instagram that used the illustrations and assets created, plus two or three press articles in local/free lifestyle magazines. There was no paid-for advertising targeting parents, or for recruitment purposes.



INCREASED DEMAND

Although there had been an increase in demand for nursery places nationally due to more parents wanting to return to work, in 22 Street Lane's catchment area there were many vacancies available – offering plenty of choice at a much lower price. It's just that parents chose to send their child to 22 Street Lane and thought it was worth the higher price.

30 HOURS FREE CHILDCARE

In September 2017, the Government introduced 30 hours free childcare for parents with a taxable income less than £100,000 with a view to increasing the number of children in nurseries throughout the UK. The proposed scheme didn't in any way fund the cost of running such a premium nursery with so much to offer. The Laing Buisson report identified that independents would need to adopt a commercial solution to avoid being at risk of losing income.

It was important that the Nursery demonstrated flexibility to working parents who were interested in taking advantage of the 30 hours funding whilst being able to continually invest in the children and the daily education that they received. The Nursery introduced a top up fee which included, but was limited to the following overheads: Nappies, Events and Outings, Trips, Forest School activities, Tiny Dancers, Extracurricular activities, Pyjama drama classes, Consumables Meals, Snacks, French Classes, Classroom Resources, Baby Yoga and a whole lot more.

The top up scheme that the owners developed was ratified and signed off by the local Council. Parents saw 22 Street Lane as a premium nursery with a justifiably higher price point that was worth paying for. Developing a plan that parents were happy with enabled the Nursery to make a profit on funded places whilst continually being able to invest in maintaining Ofsted's outstanding status across all areas.

FACILITIES AND SERVICES

There's no denying that the newly-renovated building, facilities and services offered by 22 Street Lane were a massive draw for parents. The Elmwood team even joked that it sounded like an exclusive spa resort for kids during the briefing stage. However the pre-existing higher-end nurseries offered many similar classes and learning opportunities, particularly the Leeds Montessori pre-school which also had great outdoor space and restaurant quality food.

But the key differentiator was the way in which 22 Street Lane's brand packaged everything up into one coherent offer that was desirable for both children and parents, and was worthy of a higher price tag.

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS (CONTINUED)

STAFF AND TRAINING

Again, having the very best staff looking after their children is definitely on a parent's wish list, but the key thing for the nursery is to retain them. Having a strong brand that's built around a solid positioning and distinct point of view, like 22 Street Lane, brings clarity to their day-to-day. 22 Street Lane's distinct point of view 'Play. Discovery. Growth.' is also about the staff too. The nursery is built around providing development opportunities for all, including the staff, and in addition to quarterly training days, there are extra opportunities for staff to learn new skills such as yoga so that they can then pass that on to the children in a fun and engaging way. Everything comes directly from the brand to ensure the high standards are retained.

OUTSTANDING OFSTED

Yes, of course having an Ofsted rating of 'outstanding' will encourage parents to send their child to that nursery. However, a survey conducted by Parent kind in December 2017 indicated that although a large number of parents are aware of Ofsted reports and may refer to them, the vast majority of parents use additional indicators of location and local reputation as a deciding factor when applying for a school place, rather than the Ofsted report itself.

RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE

22 Street Lane was in the prime location to start a next level nursery, aimed at affluent parents. But it had to appeal to that target audience, and make them want to pay more for it. If it had been branded like most nurseries with child-like graphics and bright colours it wouldn't have done this. 22 Street Lane's brand design was totally different for this sector, and appealed to the parents' tastes and desire for the best. The brand played a huge role in getting people through the door, as was seen from the initial unveiling on Bonfire Night.

REFERENCE SOURCES

Internal sales data

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