

# PERSONALISING CONNECTIONS

**PRINCIPAL AINUL FARHANA BUILDS NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS TO CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND TEACHERS.**

**M**anaging a centre with more than 1,000 children and overseeing a team of almost 200 teachers can be overwhelming. But Ms Ainul Farhana Binti Mohamed Bathurudin, the former Executive Principal of My First Skool at 2 Punggol Drive, takes it in her stride and does it by focusing on communication and relationships.

"As an early childhood centre leader, one of my key priorities is to connect and build relationships with the people I meet, and understand their intentions, perspectives and feelings," says Ms Ainul, who received the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award in 2022.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

"To have happy outcomes, we need to have happy people first," she emphasises. "Showing genuine care and respect for the people around me helps me establish trusting relationships with them. I believe it is important for a leader to create a trusting space for the children, parents and teachers for a joyful, happy learning environment."

Ms Shazana Latiff, whose two daughters, Lana Saabira and Laiqa Kirana Bte Mohamed Yuzaimi, have



Being present in classes helps Ms Ainul get to know each child

since graduated from the centre, says, "Ms Ainul's commitment towards the children and teachers is exemplified by her being present with her teachers in classes. She takes the time to participate in storytelling and drama sessions and greets children by their names — that is a true reflection of how genuinely personal she is."


## CREATE A SUPPORTIVE SYSTEM

Managing a large centre makes it tough to connect with every individual on her team. That is why Ms Ainul provides a range of platforms where they can share and learn from one another, such as peer observations, book clubs and role-play.

She steps in when her teachers need help. When a few teachers struggled to manage children with learning and behavioural needs,



Ms Ainul (far left) holds regular discussions with her team of teachers



## HOW TO BE A GOOD LEADER

Ms Ainul's three tips for leaders.

- 1 Be an agile learner.** Be aware of what you know and what you don't. Attend courses, read extensively, and engage in professional discourse with fellow leaders and educators. Be open to learning from children's families and the community.
- 2 Take care of yourself.** Acknowledge your limitations and set personal boundaries. For example, set aside 30 minutes for an uninterrupted lunch or a weekly 'do-not-disturb' time for reflection and planning.
- 3 Own the processes and outcomes.** Create a shared sense of ownership with the team and establish a trusting environment where members can be both candid and vulnerable. Share what worked and what did not, while validating members' positive contributions. Welcome feedback as it offers valuable perspectives and ideas.

she initiated meetings with the parents and worked with her core team to devise strategies to help the teachers. She continued to guide them through regular check-in and observation sessions. Over the span of six months, the children began to show improvements. "It's teamwork, and we need to support each other," adds Ms Ainul.

Ms Ainul, who has since moved to My First Skool at Blk 322D Sumang Walk as the Executive Principal, hopes to establish more partnerships and parent education sessions. "Both educators and parents need to have a shared understanding of the support children must be given to thrive in their growing years," she says. ●

Get more leadership inspiration from Ms Ainul Farhana at [go.gov.sg/2022ecdaawards-outstandingecleader-ainul](https://go.gov.sg/2022ecdaawards-outstandingecleader-ainul) or scan here.

