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Gryffe Manor Nursery expanding outdoors with funding from Allied Irish Bank (GB)

A nursery practitioner with 30 years' experience has completed a management buyout (MBO) of a top nursery in Houston, and will be using financial backing from Allied Irish Bank (GB) to expand outdoors.

Alison Thomson went from having a minority share of Woodlands Day Nursery to owning it outright when she negotiated an MBO with her two business partners, and secured £700,000 from Allied Irish Bank (GB).

Alison has now changed the name of the centre to Gryffe Manor Nursery, and she and her team of 28 staff are focused on expanding the nursery's outdoor activities, and founding Houston's first forest kindergarten. Soon the nursery will have a kitchen garden, chickens, and a full outdoors curriculum to complement what the 84 babies, toddlers and pre-school children learn indoors each day.

Alison said: "Gryffe Manor Nursery is set in really stunning surroundings, and I'm excited that we can now expand our learning environment outdoors. We'll be planning art, numeracy, literacy and other learning experiences out into the fresh air, which will really benefit the children.

"Buying out my business partners was initially quite daunting. I was always in charge of the nursery curriculum and day-to-day care of the children, and gradually was taking over more of the 'business' side of things too.

"Luckily I had great support from a silent business partner, and encouragement from Allied Irish Bank (GB). The team there understands how nurseries work and was incredibly helpful.

"Now I can work directly with parents, guardians and my team to make Gryffe Manor Nursery the absolute best it can be, and put all my long-term ideas into action."

Stuart Wardle, relationship manager for the specialist healthcare team at Allied Irish Bank (GB), said: “We have helped entrepreneurs across the country complete MBOs, which can often be complex transactions and require many months of work.

“Once we met Alison, heard her vision and saw the now Gryffe Manor Nursery for ourselves, we knew we could support the financial requirements of the MBO.

“As a bank we understand that nurseries have to deliver excellent childcare in a competitive environment, often facing regulatory and recruitment pressures.

“We are always keen to hear from nursery practitioners who want to expand their business, or assume greater financial control.”

In early 2017, Allied Irish Bank (GB) announced that it had ring-fenced funds for businesses operating in the healthcare, manufacturing, hotels and hospitality and professional practice sectors. The funds offer competitively priced finance and full banking facilities with relationship-driven service to established, growing businesses. For more information, visit <https://aibgb.co.uk/sector-lending-fund>

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