

**Parlez-vous du français, bébé? Oui!**  
**[Do you speak French, baby? Yes!]**

While most two and three year olds are just starting to speak their first sentences a group of toddlers on Brisbane's inner north are counting and naming animals in French.

It's all in a day's play for children at Lyndhurst Early Learning Centre at Clayfield, which has since opening in January 2009 conducted French lessons for children from aged 15 months

Lyndhurst conducts play-based French lessons twice a week at Lyndhurst covering content such as counting, family and animals to mimic the natural process a child experiences when learning to talk.

The formal lessons are reinforced throughout the week with Lyndhurst staff incorporating French songs, rhymes and games into the children's daily activities, as well as French posters, wall displays and labeling in French and English throughout the centre.

It's already starting to pay off for two-year-old Oliver Chaffey, who amazed his mother Cath Chaffey when he switched from English to French when counting.

Oliver attends Lyndhurst three times a week with his sister Lucy, 16 months, who is starting to repeat words spoken to her in French.

"Lucy's learning curve has skyrocketed since starting French, and I think it has also helped develop her English vocabulary as she knows a lot of words for a baby, as much as a two year old," Cath said.

"I think learning a foreign language early helps stimulate their minds and will give them a positive attitude about learning languages and other cultures, even if they don't continue French beyond Lyndhurst."

For multilingual Helena Angove, who speaks Serbo-Croatian and German in addition to English, the language immersion program was the clincher to enrol her sons Latham, three years, and Marshall, two years, at Lyndhurst.

"I want my boys to have a multilingual upbringing so I speak with them in Serbo-Croatian at home as well as help them practice what they've learned that day in French," Helena said.

"It instils confidence and helps them to develop better communication skills in general. I've noticed the change in both boys but particularly Marshal who was shyer in the beginning, but now he's started talking we can't keep him quiet."

Chris Sciffer Operations Manager of Children First Learning Centres the operators of Lyndhurst, said the French program was perfectly suited to the centre's philosophy of play-based learning that offers opportunities to explore, discover and create.

"Children learn by listening, seeing, imitating and practicing and their capacity for absorbing languages is at its peak in these early years,"