

The Old Station Nursery, Benson Newsletter
Nov-Dec 2010



We are now all well into the swing of this term and Christmas is just around the corner, so watch out for the inevitable invasion of glitter and all things sparkly that herald the festive season. We hope you will all be able to spend some time at nursery during the run up to Christmas, to join in some celebrations and see all the great things that are going on. Don't forget you are always welcome to come and see what your child is doing at nursery; I appreciate that work commitments can make this really difficult, but if you have a spare hour at any time and would like to come and join in with a session, please do ask your nursery manager.

During the last couple of months we have been rolling out the baby room project known as 'Beginning with Babies' across the company; all our settings have now taken part in the inspirational training with Mary Barlow in Grantham and have come back with ideas to improve the environment and routines for the babies in their care. We are now also trying the 'Fun on the Floor' programme too, which will help to extend this learning into the 2 year old rooms. If you want to learn a little more about the training, do have a look at www.thetotempole.co.uk; they also have an excellent on-line shop, which includes some fabulous resources for young children. All our nursery baby room staff enjoyed spending some of their budgets in the shop when they visited and we have the lovely wooden kitchens in most of our baby rooms now.

We always get some really lovely comments and thanks when families leave nursery, but in case you are really pleased with something in particular or just want to say 'well done' to the staff who look after your child, we have introduced some special 'well done' cards which should be in the reception area of all the nurseries. If you would like to give someone a pat on the back, do fill one of these in and give it in to the manager, it will be passed on to that member of staff and will also be recorded for their next appraisal. I hope this will help staff to feel valued; we also have several internal ways of recognising great performance and are always looking for new ways of doing this.

During the last month about 20 of our room supervisors have attended a new company training course, where they spend a day with each other learning about leadership and management, customer service and how to run staff appraisals. We ran a pilot course in Abingdon and one in Lincoln and are now using the feedback from the supervisors to fine tune the course. We will run the next round of courses in February and hope this will really help us to develop

our staff teams at every level.

After a long administrative challenge, we finally have our direct debit scheme set up. I hope you all received our letter explaining this and a direct debit form; if you have not, then please check that your nursery manager has an up to date e-mail address for you, so we can make sure you receive regular mailings without having to dig them out of the bottom of your child's bag. We hope you will take advantage of the direct debit system as it should make life much simpler all around and make nursery fees one less thing to have to remember. If you are using Employer Childcare Vouchers to pay some part of your fees, please remember to note this on your direct debit form too. Don't forget, if you sign up before Christmas we will give you a free copy of our book, 'All Aboard', which has lots of ideas to fill the weekends and holidays.

One of our former UK nursery managers has recently moved to Kenya whilst her husband is serving there with the RAF. She approached us to ask whether we would consider supporting a local centre for children of Masai families, who have disabilities and need extra support. She was amazed by what a difference the Kajaido Centre made to the lives of these children and decided to try and help. We are delighted to be working with the A.I.C. Kajaido Child Care Centre, both to raise funds to support their work, but also to allow the children in our nurseries to understand how different the lives of children in other parts of the world can be. Hopefully by now you will all have received a leaflet about the project and may have decided you could help our initial Christmas appeal by sending a very small toy or gift in, which will be packaged up and sent off to the centre later this month. If you'd like to find out more about the project, have a look at www.aick.org. We hope this will be a really positive relationship and help our children to learn about the world in a very personal way.

Best wishes,
Sarah Steel Managing Director

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NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

Thank you to those of you who have donated gifts for children at the Childcare Centre in Kajiado, Kenya this Christmas – I am sure they will be greatly appreciated.

I mentioned in our last newsletter that we would be making some major changes to our rooms, following on from our recent 'Beginning with Babies' training. We have phase one of our action plan in place now which involves having a good clear out and getting the team involved in planning how we would like our rooms to look – then the shopping will start... I am very excited about the proposed changes and can't wait to start the transformation!

You may have noticed some parent observation sheets outside your child's room. We are hoping that you will complete one of these when your child goes somewhere special, does something different or says something of particular interest. This can then be passed to your child's key person who will use the information alongside their own observations. This can be particularly helpful for children who are shy or whose language is developing.

We also have some small 'well done' cards in the foyer of the nursery. If you feel that a member of our team has done something particularly well, it would be appreciated if you could complete one of these cards and return it to me so that I can ensure that the appropriate feedback is given to the staff member.

If your child attends the after-school club, could you please ensure that you let us know if your child is not in school on any day to avoid the need for the staff to go to the classrooms/office looking for them. Also, if they are returning late to school following a trip, could you please let us know.

We will be having Christmas parties in each of the rooms on Wednesday, 15th December and are hoping for a visit from Father Christmas if he is available! Timings will be confirmed by individual rooms nearer the time.

We are holding our next parent forum on Monday, 6th December 2010 between 2pm and 3pm and between 7pm and 8pm. All parents/carers are welcome to attend. This is an opportunity for you to come and chat to the management team, raise any concerns or make suggestions.

Finally, can I please remind you that mobile phones are not allowed to be used at all whilst in the nursery. This is to ensure that we are meeting our obligations in respect of safeguarding children.

Baby Room

We have lots of Christmas art activities planned for the babies over the next few weeks – look out for the glitter! We will also be looking to continue to take the babies outside, as much as possible, between now and Christmas. As such, please could you make sure that you bring in some warm clothes and coats for them.

Kim Nicholls
Baby room supervisor

1-2s

The children have been very busy taking part in lots of messy play and art. We have been trying out lots of different ideas for messy play including playing with oats and other dried foods. Shredded paper is still very popular - especially throwing it in the air!

We have a new water tray for the children with some different plastic animals which the children are really enjoying using.

In the next few weeks we are planning to do some more fruit tasting as this is always popular with the children.

We do like to take the children outside as much as possible so could you please make sure they have suitable clothing for playing outside?

Lisa Blofield
1-2s room supervisor

2-3s

We have recently made the most of the wet weather by going out with our raincoats and boots on and splashing in the puddles. The children loved playing in the wet mud, and making mud mountains and castles in the garden.

The children always enjoy messy play and we have been using paint, foam and different food items in the recent weeks.

You will see from our display board that we have been making nests, birds and hedgehogs using different resources. The children also made a lovely firework display using shiny paper and glitter.

Lavenia Tava
2-3s room supervisor

Pre-school

We had a very successful visit from the Fire Section recently. Pete and Lee talked to the children about firework safety and then, to the delight of the children, we had the opportunity to climb in and explore their fire engine. We all had the chance to set off the siren as well - which the children thought was rather loud!

The children also enjoyed making their own chocolate apple for Guy Fawkes Night, in the first week back after half term.

During this term we will be focusing on Winter and Christmas and have included in our plans walks to collect pine cones to decorate, candle holders to make and, hopefully, writing and posting a letter to Father Christmas!

As part of learning about different traditions and cultures we will be looking at St Andrew's Day on 30th November. To finish the term, we aim to have a Christmas concert where the two pre-school rooms will be combined to sing some wonderful Christmas songs for family and friends.

If there is anything that you would like to know more about, please ask. Equally, if you would like to help with an activity then you will be most welcome to. Both classrooms have a helper sheet outside of the room.

Sian Norman & Glenda Hall
Pre-school supervisors

Breakfast & after-school/Holiday club

October holiday club was a relaxed week where we made cards, made and played with playdough and went out for walks. We also utilised the other building on a few afternoons to play in the soft play and to watch films on the big TV.

If you have been into after-school club 2, you may have heard us talking about 'High 5's'. This was introduced for rewarding helpful/polite/outstanding behaviour and the reward is then displayed on the 'High 5' wall.

We recently received a small grant from Oxfordshire County Council to obtain a fire pit. We are looking forward to using this for barbecues and other fire activities (closely supervised of course!).

We are hoping to finally take over the old community development building on the 19th November and will then begin transforming the space into our own. The children have put their ideas forward and we are using many of their ideas, although we do regret that a swimming pool and ice skating rink won't fit in!

Carol Beattie
Breakfast & after-school club supervisor