

The Old Station Nursery, Cottesmore 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](http://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](http://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.

Many of you will know that we had a full OFSTED inspection a couple of weeks ago; we were extremely pleased with the feedback from the inspector but are not officially allowed to share the outcome with you until the report is published. However, last week the new OFSTED inspector organization was having IT problems and said they were unable to release the report, although it had been completed. We hope to have something to share with you by the end of this week, but suffice it to say, it is good news!

Finally, I know there is a great deal of uncertainty at Cottesmore with the accelerated departure of the

Harrier fleet as confirmed in the Strategic Defence Review. We are obviously very concerned about the future of the Station and how this will impact on the nursery. I had a very long meeting last week with OC BSW to establish as much as possible how declining numbers of families will impact on our nursery provision. For now, there seems to be little detail and we will have to stay reactive. However, whatever the long term future for the Station, it seems clear that there will be many families still living in Families Accommodation for some time to come. We have a private contract with Defence Estates and are not linked to the closure of the Harrier Squadrons, so we will continue to operate at RAF Cottesmore. We will have to tweak our organization of the nursery; as you have already seen, the reduction in overall numbers of babies has led to a very new combined baby room, which seems to be working very well. We will continue to look at how to deploy staff to maintain ratios and avoid unnecessary costs, and this should mean that we can ride out any increase or decrease in numbers of children attending, whilst still remaining viable.

Please help us to spread the word that we are very much open for business and will continue to be so; no one likes uncertainty and we hope that you will help us by recommending us to other families both on and off the Station, to help us to continue to provide the much needed care for families at Cottesmore.

Best wishes,  
**Sarah Steel** Managing Director

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## NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

We are delighted to introduce our new combined baby room, **The Buttercups**. We have combined the room due to the expected drop in child occupancy with families moving away and to provide greater consistency with staffing within the room. This is proving to be a great success for both staff and babies and we are all looking forward to the Christmas season together.

Changes have also been made to our pre-school and ladybird rooms. They will now be joining up in our newly appointed dining room for lunch which is becoming a lovely social occasion, and they will also be joining for both breakfast and tea in the ladybird room which is working out really well.

We have been celebrating **Diwali**, the Hindu Festival of Lights this month throughout the whole nursery. Pre-school were especially creative and made Diva Lamps and Rangoli designs, all of which are on display in the portacabin.

## Photographs.

We have organised Tempest to come into Nursery on the 25<sup>th</sup> November to take photographs of the children. They will be starting at 9am - please feel free to bring any siblings along for a joint photograph if you wish. Tempest have guaranteed to get all orders ready before Christmas – they make great Christmas gifts.

## Goodbyes

We are saying goodbye to several staff members this month and would like to wish them all the best of luck in their new adventures: Joanna Daffurn is moving to London, Karen Smith is leaving to live a life by the sea in Cornwall, Louise Williams begins her maternity leave in December and by no means last, Liam Back who is leaving for pastures new. We also say a very big thank you to Shanti, who has been on a short term contract with us to work with the pre-school in particular. She has made a huge difference during her time with us and we are sorry not to be able to extend her contract with us, but due to the drop in numbers across the nursery this is just not viable for us. We wish her all the best in the future.

## Welcome

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new member of staff - Christianne Dobson who will be joining our Pre-school. She looks forward to meeting you all.

## We Wish You a Merry Christmas...



With the Christmas season fast approaching, here at The Old Station Nursery we will be celebrating in a big way! We will be having our wonderful children's nativity play and a full week of Christmas arts, crafts and baking (yum, yum).

We are all looking forward to these following winter months and hope you will all join us in celebrating Christmas together.