

The Old Station Nursery, Waddington 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

As you will be aware, Maxine has now left to go and have her second child; we all wish her the very best of luck and hope she enjoys her time off. We are thrilled to welcome Nicki Gray as our new manager. She will be working closely with Paula our Operations Manager over the next few months and in partnership with Gemma and the rest of the team. Nicki is looking forward to meeting you all over the next few weeks.

Dates for your diary:

Our Christmas Carol Concert will take place on the 7th and the 8th of December in the church at 10am. It would be wonderful to see as many parents there as can make it.

Santa will also be visiting the nursery again this year on Wednesday 15th December. This coincides with the Children's Christmas Party. If your child does not normally attend nursery on a Wednesday but would like to join the celebrations, please let us know.

As a team here at Waddington, we were all very excited to be one of 15 nurseries who were lucky enough to be selected to take part in a training programme, led by the Huddersfield Early Excellence Centre. As part of this we will also be receiving resources to the value of several thousand pounds. The programme focuses on outdoor play and how areas of learning can be reflected outdoors, as they are indoors, but with all the resources on a bigger scale. For example, if you have small toys and funnels and jugs in your water play inside, outside they should be much bigger, with watering cans, pieces of tubing etc. In this way learning opportunities and experiences are different from indoor experiences.

In this newsletter, I would like to give you a feel for one of our training days that took place at Tattershall Woods with Mark Whelan. I hope you feel inspired!

Many thanks,

Gemma Robinson
Outdoor Project Leader

When we arrived at the woods everyone congregated beside Mark and his horsebox which we soon discovered was housing for the toilet – all very important! Mark opened the session with a team building exercise to put us at ease and to help him to get to know us. We then collected some bags which contained water, biscuits and first aid equipment before being given the following ground rules:

1. No going off the path that had been set.
2. Be kind to the environment
3. Enjoy ourselves
4. Be open minded

We were then directed into the middle of the woods to

the tree which had been named 'The Old Man' which triggered the inner child in some of us who wanted to climb and bounce in it.

Our first activity was to split into four groups, with a team leader from each group being told that everyone apart from them would be blind folded and that we had to lead our team to a secret destination. Initially we were not allowed to talk to our team, but after a few minutes we were allowed to direct them using words. The point of this activity was to place ourselves in the child's shoes, being frightened of the unknown as many of us were and reinforcing the importance of communication and trust. When we had reached our destination we had to set our own boundaries - where we felt we shouldn't go further than. This showed us that it's good to let the children set their own boundaries – one, they are more likely to comply because they have been involved in the setting of them, and two, it shows there is trust between you and the child by allowing them to make their own decisions.

We had a game of hide and seek where we all had lots of fun - we could have played it all day trying to see who could find the best hiding place! It was also amazing to see that no one broke the boundaries that we had set. We then went for a walk where we were asked to collect a stick before bringing it back to a circle time where we all had to describe what our stick was and give it a name; it was amazing how much discussion this created.

Mark really made us realise how much the EYFS can be linked to outdoor experiences and that by simply discussing this as a group, we became motivated by it. This experience has given us all the confidence to realize how much the children learning and develop by using the environment and the natural resources that we have around us, not necessarily toys which cost money.

Mark then sparked our imaginations by setting us all off to 'find fairyland which had been destroyed by a fat-bottomed dragon'! We had to work together or individually to rebuild the fairyland community; it was lots of fun using the resources we had available in the environment and everyone enjoyed the opportunity to utilise our imagination and creativity!

Since this initial training day, Mark has now visited our setting twice to work with staff and all age groups to help show us what resources we have available in the nursery environment and to emphasize to staff the importance of staff being motivated and modeling positive behavior as well as getting down on the children's level.

I feel the important thing we learnt is that we don't always need toys; to go back to the basics of using what we have in our environment and remembering the games we used to play as children, such as hide and seek, hop scotch and den building. In conclusion, the overall information and experiences

that Mark has given us have been invaluable. It has made us all re-assess what we are doing as nursery nurses to ensure that we provide the best possible provision and experiences for the children in our care. We now realize that we need to fully utilise ourselves as the best resource the children have!

ROOM NEWS

Tigers

Hello to you all. Please could we use this opportunity to remind you all, now that days are really getting colder, to bring outdoor clothes in for your children; we will be spending lots of time outside in all the different weathers, exploring and playing, so we need to keep warm and dry as much as we can!

We have changed a few things in our room - firstly the fish tank will become more of an interactive feature, so look out for the changes there. We have also started our autumn displays and our autumn table so please keep an eye open for things to add to our table. The children have been enjoying leaf painting and bark rubbing – when we went out looking for big leaves we all enjoyed a ‘bear hunt’ – it was great fun!

We have also taken receipt of some new toys from the outdoor course that Gemma has been attending; the camping and picnic role play toys have been a huge hit. The next set of toys from the outdoor course will be playground games; a range of balls, hoops, cones and lots more - we can't wait to play with these.

Tigers completed lots of different activities for Halloween and fireworks night – did you see their chocolate apples, rockets and splatter painting?

I hope that you are all quite familiar with the Christmas song sheets that we sent home with your children for our Christmas carol concert – please do help your child learn these new songs! In addition, if you would like to come into tigers and help us with our singing please talk to any member of staff in the room. We would love to hear your singing voice.

Tigers would just like to thank all parents for the support and ideas that you have been sharing with the staff. Please feel free to ask questions at any time even if its just to look at your child's learning journey.

Little Gems

Well here we are once again getting used to the dark nights and cold days and getting into the run up to Christmas. Most of you will have received your carol sheets – please can we ask you to practice them with your children in preparation for our concert - we will be sending out invitations for our carol concert nearer the time.

We have had a very busy term so far with dancing, photos, French and a baby clinic in the role play area and at the time this newsletter goes out we'll also be celebrating Children in Need.

Can I remind you all to ensure your children bring suitable outdoor clothes and also some spare clothes to change into.

Finally we are always pleased to have parents volunteer to help in the class if they would like to be involved and our door is always open if you need to discuss anything.

Caterpillars

We would like to start by welcoming Layla and Mathew to our room; we hope they enjoy being with us!

We have lots of new things to tell you about – firstly, we now have a ‘WOW’ moment box so parents can post any ‘WOW’ moments your child may have done that we may have missed, for example first tooth, first word, or first visit. This box is on the windowsill opposite the coat pegs. We have also changed the room around and you may notice some new toys and treasure baskets appear. Recently we have been having song time each day after breakfast; the children seem to really enjoy this and it's a great way to start the day. We also now have a natural investigation table where the children can explore the outdoors, indoors. One last note, now that its getting colder outside we will still be spending lots of time out of doors - so please bring lots of warm winter clothes so we can enjoy all the different weather that will soon be coming our way!

Ladybirds

Hello to everyone from the ladybird room. We would like to start by saying Happy birthday and goodbye to the following children - Charlie, Eva, Jack and Ewan. We hope you all had a lovely birthday and enjoy your time in the butterfly room. You will be missed! We would also like to extend a very warm welcome to Lucas, Taylor and Rose who have come through to us from the Caterpillar room. I am sure that you will have lots of fun with us all.

We have been very busy since our last newsletter. As many of you will have seen we have moved the room around yet again! We feel that the room now looks more inviting for the children and believe that the children have enjoyed the change.

As always we take time to look at how we can develop the children's interests and learning experiences. Recently we have been enhancing areas with more toys and treasure baskets. This has come from watching the children and building on their interests.

We are hoping to introduce ‘Fern’ to the children; Fern will become like another child in the ladybird room. We hope this will help with the transition for all the children and we will be encouraging the children to befriend Fern and get her to join in on the activities too. Maybe you could ask your child to introduce you?

The children have been enjoying the autumn display in the room and we have been doing some leaf printing, going on nature walks, baking and so much more.

All staff have been receiving outdoor training that we have thoroughly enjoyed and now we are going to spend some time looking at the ladybird garden to see what we can do and how we can develop it so the children have the best experiences. Do also keep an eye out to see what new toys and materials we will be receiving.

As always we would like to thank our parents for all your support - your input is really welcomed.

Butterflies

Firstly we would like to say hello to Jack and Eva who are joining us from ladybirds - we hope they have lots of fun with us too. We are also sorry to see Paige leaving the nursery but we hope she has had a great time with us.

We have had a very busy and fun October with all the Halloween activities with Jack the Dragon to enhance them. In November we have enjoyed preparing for bonfire night and our 'spotty' Children in Need.

As with the other rooms, please can I remind you to bring some warm, water proof coats and clothing for the children to wear outside in all weather and for splashing in the puddles!

Once again, thank you all for your support and please feel free to come to any member of staff if you have questions.