



## THE OLD STATION NURSERY, BENSON MARCH - APRIL 2012

We have had a really busy couple of months here at our Head Office in Faringdon, which has seen Rachel Attwood join us as Operations Manager with overall responsibility for all of our nurseries. Rachel is a very experienced regional manager and has enjoyed visiting all of our sites and meeting the teams at each place. Between us we have enjoyed discussing all the things that we think we are doing really well, as well as identifying areas which we want to improve on, and this has led to an enormous action plan which we are now all working our way through!

At the same time, we have taken part in 2 pilot inspections with OFSTED, at our Linton-on-Ouse and Innsworth nurseries. As you may be aware, the Early Years Foundation Stage (the curriculum followed by all nurseries, pre-schools and childminders) is being revised and we are expecting the final version to be published next week, ready for implementation in September this year. OFSTED will therefore change their inspection framework to reflect the revised curriculum, so we volunteered to take part in their pilot inspection programme to find out more about the changes which will be made. It was a very useful exercise, if a little stressful for the teams involved, and Rachel has a list of changes which will come into force with the new framework and is now working with the managers to make sure they are prepared. I don't think this will make any visible difference to the children, or to yourselves, but will hopefully help us to continue to drive quality and offer the very best environment for your children.

We will share the highlights of the new EYFS once it is published and will have further updates on any changes as we move towards September, but do ask if you are interested in any particular aspect of it.

Best wishes,

**Sarah Steel**

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### OPERATIONS MANAGER UPDATE

I'd like to start by saying a huge thank you to Sarah, Emma, Jo and all of the Managers and their teams for making me feel so welcome at Old Station Nurseries. It's been a whirlwind first few weeks, but I've enjoyed every minute of it.

It's been both a fantastic opportunity and experience, being part of the Pilot EYFS Inspection Framework and the teams certainly made us all proud when the Ofsted Inspectors visited Linton-on Ouse and Innsworth. We had some really good feedback about the quality of provision that the nurseries are delivering, and a few good pointers to support our ongoing Quality Improvement Programme.

I'm often asked by parents why we do not teach the children to write. Our role as practitioners is to support emergent writing skills and help children to develop the techniques required to support writing, once they go to school. We do this in several ways. Throughout the day, children are offered lots of opportunities to make marks in gloop (cornflour and water.....if you haven't already tried this at home, you really should give it a go!) sand, and with paints, chinks, paintbrushes and water and light boards. All of these activities support fine manipulative skills and development pincer grip, the basic skills to being able to write.

With older children who demonstrate an interest in writing letters, the staff are on hand to support correct letter formation. We know that a lot of parents like to support and encourage their children to start to write, especially their own names, but may we please ask that if your child is writing at home, that you encourage letters to be written in lower case only. This will really support your child's transition to developing their writing skills, when they go to school.

I'm really looking forward to meeting many of you as I visit the nurseries, and always welcome any feedback.

Best wishes

Rachel Attwood

## NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

We had a very enjoyable and busy week this month during our 'Healthy Body, Happy Me week', which is an annual healthy lifestyle campaign arranged by the National Day Nurseries Association. The week was broken down into 'Move it Monday', 'Moos-day Tuesday', 'Wellbeing Wednesday', 'Tumbling Thursday' and 'Getting Strong Friday' and the children have been involved in different physical activities including yoga, 'Going on a bear hunt', planting fruit and vegetables, tasting different fruits, and singing songs around the campfire (fire pit) over the week. Do log onto Facebook to check out all of our pictures!

We have had a few changes to the staff team recently as we have had to say goodbye to staff who have moved on, including Katrina who has worked at the nursery for over five years, as her husband has been posted. Claire will also be moving on at the beginning of April as she has decided to embark on a new career as an assessor. We wish her every success in her new post. We are currently recruiting for some new staff to get our team back up to full strength!

You may already be aware that we have been holding 'Parent Forums' in the nursery where parents have had the opportunity to come in and speak to senior members of staff on a twice-yearly basis. These are now being replaced with 'Parent Partnership Groups' and you will see the dates for the upcoming meetings displayed on the front door. We are hoping that you will be able to join us for these informal meetings, where you will have the opportunity to become more involved in nursery life as we discuss topics such as policy changes, menu changes etc.

During the past few weeks, we have been asking the pre-school and after-school club children to complete a questionnaire (with a little help for the younger ones), with a view to finding out their views, likes and dislikes about nursery too. We are still collecting in their answers and will collate the results once they are all in to see what else we can do to meet their wishes - within reason! We'll let you know how we get on.

You will see a poster in the foyer about the 'Armed Forces Playdays' event which is taking place at Sunnyside, Benson on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April between 10am and 3pm. I have been attending the planning meetings for this and it looks set to be a really fun day for everyone.

Can I please remind you all that we are again collecting vouchers from Sainsbury's and Tesco? We are able to order some really great resources for the children with these vouchers so please do bring them all in to us. Thank you.

Finally, thank you to all of those parents who have returned the green registration and permission forms

with current contact details etc. If you have not yet returned your child's, please can you do so as soon as possible?

Many thanks, Julie

### **Baby Room**

We have as usual been very busy in the baby room. The babies created cards for Mothering Sunday and enjoyed experiencing the variety of activities during our Healthy Body, Happy Me week – especially the sensory play with lettuce!

We have plans to prepare for Easter with a variety of activities and hopefully, weather permitting, we will be able to get out and about a bit more too.

Sian Norman  
Supervisor, Baby Room

### **1-2's Room**

We have been experiencing lots of sensory play with sand, scented water and flour, glitter and water combined.

Now that the weather is brighter we have been able to enjoy lots more outside play too. We will also be planting sunflower seeds with the children – do look out for evidence of them growing!

During Healthy Body, Happy Me week we tasted exotic fruits, printed using paint and fruit and had lots of music and dance to keep us fit.

Claire Pendlebury  
Supervisor, 1-2's Room

### **2-3's Room**

In the 2-3's room we celebrated St David's Day and Alison made Welsh cakes for everyone.

During Healthy Body, Happy Me week the children enjoyed planting tomatoes and lettuce; we have to wait and see if they grow.

The children really enjoyed 'Going on a bear hunt' – we borrowed a big bear from the baby room to make it more authentic!

The children were also busy making special cards and cakes for Mother's Day which I'm sure were loved.

Alison Ward  
Supervisor, 2-3's Room

### **Pre-school 1**

We have been looking at the story of Jack and the Beanstalk in pre-school, particularly focusing on big and small, and sequencing i.e. what happens next? We have planted our own beanstalk and flowers and had boiled 'golden' eggs for snack with toast.

On Pancake Day the children really enjoyed participating in making pancakes on the fire pit which Errin cooked and the children ate - yum! We have been using the Oxford reading tree books to encourage the children to talk and describe the storyline through use of the pictures as a group activity.

For St David's Day the children made Welsh fruit bread – 'barra brith'.

Errin Nelson  
Supervisor, Pre-school 1

### **Pre-school 2**

This term we have been looking at Nursery Rhymes, including activities surrounding Humpty Dumpty, Hey Diddle, Diddle and Incy Wincy Spider.

Mother's Day surprises included truffles, medals and planting sunflower seeds.

For Healthy Body, Happy Me week, the children took part in activities including yoga, sticky kids and singing around a campfire. We had berries for snack, which was very popular.

Our 'Good Deed' tree is now in place - the children receive a leaf to place on the tree if they do something particularly kind.

For Easter, the children are making Easter nests – yum!

Glenda Hall  
Supervisor, Pre-school 2

### **After-school Club**

We have had quite a few new children join us recently; welcome to you all and we hope you have settled in and are enjoying the after-school club.

Vicky and Glenda and I will be getting together very soon to plan a fabulous fun filled Easter holiday club – so don't delay and book your place now!

We have tracked down our X-Box which has gone down very well with the children. We have been asking the children what new games they would like us to invest in and am on the case!

Carol Beattie  
Supervisor, After-school Club