

27th February, 2015

Dear Parents /Carers,

I would like to inform you of some new exciting developments within the nursery this term. These focus on developing partnerships between the home and nursery setting. They also highlight children's current achievements within the home setting, which is then shared within the nursery. Do feel free to ask any questions about the new developments, staff will be more than happy to explain these new activities.

New Staff

We would like to inform you that Ellis Madden will be leaving our nursery. She would like to develop her career within the family worker sector, which links closely to her current university studies. Both the staff and children would like to wish Ellis all the best for the future. Kayleigh Keen will be our new room leader for both the toddler and baby unit, starting on the 6th March. Kayleigh has been on placement within the nursery and has shown aspiring ideas for the nursery. She is very enthusiastic and will be an asset to our team. She has a First Class Honours degree in Development and Educational Psychology, and is currently completing her Early Years Teaching Status. We would all like to welcome her to the team at Little Steps.

WOW Board

We will be creating a WOW board in the entrance area for the Pre-School and another in the entrance area for the toddler and baby room. We are encouraging parents to bring in events in your children's lives displayed through either artwork or photographs. These include any celebrations within the home, such as weddings, new baby in the family home and any other event of interest that they might like to share with us. The purpose of the WOW board is to celebrate children's achievements and celebrations within their lives. This also promotes their self-esteem and confidence. We want to acknowledge children's achievements and share these with the children and staff in our setting.

Stay and Play Sessions

To develop our working relationships with parents we will be offering stay and play sessions. We invite parents, grandparents or other family members to join the session with their child, one adult per child. We are offering three x one-hour long slots on selected days for parents to book their stay and play sessions. A stay and play session sheet will be provided in the entrance hall for you to book.

Cooking Classes

Children in the Pre-School will be taking part in termly cookery classes. Children have been put into groups: Little Tasters and Mini Chefs. Please check the notice board in the porch to see which group your child is in.

Travel Bear

All of the children in the nursery will have an opportunity to take *George* the teddy bear home for the weekend. We are encouraging parents to complete a diary account and provide pictures if you wish to. This will be shared with all of the children during group discussion time. All children will have the opportunity to take *George* home on a rotational basis, however if you have any exciting places or interesting events coming up, please let us know and we will book it in the diary, and you can take *George* along with you.

Mud Kitchen

Our 'mud kitchen' has offered a wealth of learning opportunities and health benefits to the children during outdoor play. The opportunities to support all the areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through muddy play are abundant:

- Personal, Social and Emotional development

Older children are grow in confidence as they add resources to their muddy play such as pots, pans and sticks and realise they can create different effects. This has given an opportunity for encouraging sharing, turn taking and respecting the feelings of others.

- Communication and Language

Playing in a mud kitchen has encouraged the most amazing conversations between children. They recall a real life muddy event, and use imaginative words to describe the muddy textures and sounds. Making make up stories, songs and rhymes before, during and after their muddy experience!

- Physical development

Children use different ways of manipulating the mud such as mark making, pouring, scooping, carrying, and splashing etc. They are beginning to demonstrate good control and co-ordination in large and small movements.

Muddy play provides opportunities for children to risk assess and problem solve. Staff have been asking the children 'what do you think?' 'What is the best way to do that?' This allows children opportunities to express their ideas and consider self-care alongside an adult (especially when getting cleaned up afterwards!) Exposure to mud and dirt can support children's immune system in the long term, not to mention the benefits to the mind and body that just being out in the fresh air brings.

- Literacy

Children love to draw pictures or write letters in the mud - we allow them a range of tools to do this with such as sticks, spades, stones, shells and fir cones etc.

To extend this we will be creating books which can be made with the photos taken and children can retell 'the story' of their muddy time!

- Mathematics

Opportunities to create mathematical experiences for children are many in a mud kitchen. Children have been weighing, measuring, comparing, counting, sorting and sharing with the use of containers, jugs, scales, stones, leaves, sticks and pipettes.

- Understanding the World

Through muddy play children can learn about their immediate environment and ask questions about mud, weather, growth, decay and how things change over time.

- Expressive Art and Design

Children engage in imaginative or symbolic play with or without peers. This may include baking a mud pie, sailing the muddy ocean on a pirate ship, going on a bear hunt, being a great explorer or having friends round for tea!

Changing the consistency of the mud to make it thicker allows the children to create amazing, imaginative models that they can add other natural objects to such as leaves, twigs, stones, shells and bark.

So, next time your child wants to jump in that muddy puddle..... don't think of it as dirt to be avoided but a well rounded learning opportunity with wonderful health benefits for all!

Bug Hotel

The children have been exploring the natural environment outdoors, using magnifying glasses to find minibeasts in our bug hotel. This gives children the opportunity to develop their language and communication, talking about the insects in our garden. Staff have been encouraging children to explore their own thinking by asking them questions to extend their own knowledge. We plan to extend this to children's creative development, giving them the opportunity to draw the minibeasts which they seen.

Spare Clothes

Please can I remind all parents to bring in a spare set of clothes for your children. We would have a limited amount of spare clothes within the nursery, which are often not returned to the nursery. It is important that parents provide a set of clothing each day - these can be left on your child's coat peg if you wish. Please do not put them into carrier bags, due to health and safety. We ask that they go into your child's nursery bag.

Parent Questionnaires

Thank you for taking your time to complete the questionnaires. I am in a process of collecting all the data. This will then be shared with parents as well as answering your questions.

Dates for your diary

5th March - World Book Day - We are inviting children to dress up as their favourite book character.

13th March - (7.30 -9.00am) Mother's Day breakfast - We are inviting mothers to come in between the stated to time to share a breakfast with their child. Parents will also have an opportunity to play with their child for the morning. Attendance Slips will be issued to parents shortly and need to be back by 27th Feb.

13th March Red Nose Day - Children are invited to give £1 to the charity and dress up in red for the day.

April 2015 - Parent's evening - We will be hosting this term's parent's evening in April. More information to follow shortly. Parents will be able to book 10 minute slots to speak to their child's key worker or to me. If you have any issues which you would like to address that may take longer than 10 minutes, we always welcome you discussing them with us so please arrange a separate appointment - this can be done any time of the year, of course.

As always, please do feel free to share any ideas or suggestion with us.

Yours faithfully

Lana Race - Nursery Manager