

E.C.C.C. News July 2013

Top Marks

From the Chair of Trustees Peter Marks

Notes from the Trustees: Request for more trustees

It is very pleasing to all of us that the nursery continues to provide such excellent care and development for our children. In the face of difficult economic conditions we continue to deliver high quality services which are a credit to Billie, her senior team and all staff. The enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism of the staff is obvious and is splendid to see. We are also very pleased with the development and first stages of delivery of the nursery's strategic improvement plan which provides us with the framework to strive towards an 'Outstanding' grading at our next Ofsted inspection.

Where we are need help is with the size of our Trustee Board. We currently only have four trustees and as a result it makes it difficult to provide the Director and the nursery with breadth of support. The role of trustees is to set and maintain our vision, mission and values; to provide direction and develop our strategy and support its delivery; to review, monitor and maintain policies; to promote the organisation externally and provide the Director and her staff with support and challenge. Whilst we are as diligent as we can be more of us would make us more effective and make the nursery more effective. It can be difficult at times and requires a willingness on occasion to make difficult decisions but ultimately it is highly rewarding. If you are interested in acting as a trustee and would like to discuss it further please contact our Treasurer Kevin Billington on 07971 015851 who will be delighted to hear from you.

Tess, Francesca and Ellen

We are delighted to welcome Tess Clark back to Rainbow. You may remember that Tess left around this time last year to complete her post-graduate teaching qualification. Having Tess back means that we comfortably exceed statutory levels of qualified staff. We are also delighted to introduce Francesca Santus. Francesca joins us a trainee and is currently working in Sunshine although we are still deciding where Francesca will be based over the coming months. Our other new face is Ellen Scotford who is working mainly in Tiny Tots over the summer. Ellen will be leaving mid-September to complete her Level six teaching qualification.

Sad Goodbyes

Fatima Xavier will be leaving us at the end of August. Fatima joined us a trainee and achieved her level three qualification last February. Fatima is leaving to pursue her interest in family support. We are also sorry to be saying goodbye to Ellen Dean. Ellen has worked here for 5 years as an Early Years Specialist and was promoted to Room Leader 2 years ago. Ellen has just completed her foundation degree in Early Years and is leaving in order to concentrate obtaining the honours degree after a further year of study. Ellen will be pursuing her life-long dream of becoming a school teacher. Trustees and staff would like to thank Ellen and Fatima for their valuable contribution and wish them both the best for the future

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Free Early Education for Two Year Olds

We are pleased to announce that we will be providing the new Free Early Education for two year olds from September 2013. If you are the parent or carer of a two year old and you receive certain benefits you could be eligible to apply for a free early education place - currently 12 hours per week from the term after their second birthday. In order to be eligible for a free place, you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Child Tax Credit, provided you are not also claiming Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Universal Credit

If you are interested please speak to the office – we will be more than happy to discuss the funding and help with your application.

Updated Debt Policy

We have updated our debt policy. The changes mean that we will take action much earlier when an account goes into arrears. This is to try to prevent large arrears from building and also to protect the majority of people who pay their bills in time. Because we are a small charity, unpaid nursery fees means less money for toys, equipment and care and repair. The updated policy is included in this newsletter and a hard or electronic copy can also be obtained from the office. If you are having (or think you might have) trouble with clearing your account, please speak to the office as soon as possible and we will work with you to find the best solution.

Blunt & NOT to the Point

Please ensure that your child's nails are short and blunt. This prevents injury to other children. Scratching is a behaviour that many children engage in. We can usually work together with parents and carers to resolve the issue by adopting a consistent approach at nursery and at home. This can be a difficult issue for all concerned and ensuring that your child's nails are unlikely to mark another child's face makes the issue easier to deal with when it does occur. Thank you for your co-operation with this.

Rainbow Graduation

Rainbow Room's graduation ceremony for children leaving to go to school was held on Thursday 18th July. It was a wonderful event. The children sang the turtle song and 'Down in the Jungle' resplendent in their mini caps and gowns. They were completely unfazed by the sea of cameras. In fact there were more than a few cheeky ones mugging for the cameras! The class of 2013 received graduation certificates each with a personal dedication describing their achievements and what we have grown to know and love about them over the years. There were a few tears from parents and staff because we have cared for some of Rainbow children since they were babes in arms and we will miss them. We wish the class of 2013 all things wonderful. It has been an immense privilege to care for you and to be part of your family. Thank you!

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Fee Update

As you may have seen from the signs around the centre, our fees will be increasing from September. Rainbow and Sunshine have had small increases in line with inflation and our operating costs. We have had to increase the fees in Tiny Tots and Tiny Stars by a larger amount and this is to reflect the considerably higher cost of the 1:3 adult to child ratio in these rooms, as well as the fees charged by the small number of local settings still accepting under twos. We believe that the new prices are still very competitive; being over one pound per hour cheaper than the two local children's centres. A full breakdown of the new fees and a comparison to other settings is attached. Please speak to the office if you have any questions or concerns.

Rooms Round Up

Tiny Stars

To make the most of the weather we have enhanced the garden with some new resources including a new sand pit. We have also spent time in the St George's Park where the children particularly enjoy feeding the ducks. Summer means a greater variety of fresh fruit and vegetables so we have been enjoying new tastes and flavours. We are planning to develop the room by developing some of the learning zones. We will post a floor plan so that parents can see what happens in each area of the room and how it supports learning. We are also looking forward to parents evening on the 19th of August.

Tiny Tots

We have been making the most of the summer weather with picnics and playing with water in the garden. We have been focusing on early maths and have been using different sized boxes which enable us to use quantitative language like "bigger", "smaller", "less" and "more". We made jig-saws using the children's pictures, developing problem solving skills. We have made an interactive song board so for example when we sing "Way Up High in the Apple Tree" we can take the apples of the board. We are also looking forward to Tiny Tots parent's evenings on the 20th and 21st of August.

Rainbow News

Thank you to all the parents who attended Rainbow Room's parent's evenings. We had an excellent turnout and were pleased to report that children are making good progress across the areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We have enjoyed preparations for Graduation and were very proud of how well rainbow children did. Our summer plans include having more trips. We are hoping to get to the beach if the wonderful weather holds. We are also planning activities that develop the children's fine motor skills as this will help them as they are learning to write. As with the other rooms we have been focusing on mathematics with problem solving, numerical and quantitative language and understanding shapes.

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Sunshine

We have been doing some role playing in the garden with the boat. So we've had sharks in the sea, been to the beach and had our own ice-cream hut. Imagination is a glorious thing! Playing with water is fun and also helps us keep cool. Paddling, painting with water and finding objects under the bubbles in soapy water have been useful ways of developing the children's gross and fine motor skills. We have turned our home corner into a fruit and vegetable shop (we also sell paddling pools). Playing shops is part of our development of early maths and enables us to introduce numerical and quantitative language. Other news; The remodelling of Sunshine bathroom is complete. We have also been introducing ACE (Accounting Early for Lifelong Learning) which is a more in-depth way of assessing children. ACE enables us to get to know the children better so that we can be more effective in meeting their individual needs. Currently we are only using this for a small section of children in Sunshine but we are working towards rolling this out to the entire 2 year old cohort. If you have any questions or would like more information about the ACE programme please speak with Lucy Arnott the Unit Manager for Sunshine.

We Want Your Number!

We have a new text alert system that allows us to contact you with important news and event reminders. This is one more reason to ensure that we have your correct contact details. If you have changed your telephone number, email address or house address please tell the OFFICE without delay. We also need to know about any changes for people listed as emergency contact.

Bristol City Council Quality Visit

We were visited by the Council's Early Years Consultant. Consultant's work with settings across Bristol to develop the quality of Early Years provision. The consultant toured the nursery and met with Billie, the Director and other senior staff. We spoke about the Council's new focus on mathematics and about the ACE programme (see Sunshine news above) as well as the quality of our provision overall. The Consultant was very positive about our setting and we are now waiting to see what grading we are awarded. We will of course let you know in the next newsletter.

Life's A Beach

Thank you to everyone who attended Beach Day. Good weather, nice food and your company made it a lovely event. We hoped you enjoyed the pictures!