

Bradpole Preschool Chairs Report 2017-18

Another busy year with some significant changes.... the most obvious one I am looking at – the floor and the major refurbishments and new furniture in the room.

The other major change is that after careful consideration of our finances, we have managed to recruit a dedicated admin manager to the team.

Previously this work was carried out by Nikki and also Kathryn. In compiling the job description with them both, getting them to list all of the tasks they did, it is unfathomable how they managed to get all of it done!!! So it feels very fortunate that we managed to recruit someone willing to take it on. Jo Hughes has been with us for about 6 months now. Nikki has been doing a fantastic job of showing Jo the ropes and supporting her through this first year long cycle of the job.

Other staff news, unfortunately, for varying reasons, neither Emma nor Nicole were able to return to working at the preschool after their maternity leave. The team (and some of the kids and parents) were really looking forwards to working with them again. Fortunately though, both Naomi and Ruken have been able to stay on with us and have become established members of the team.

This year the staff received a pay rise of 5% which is more than in previous years but is in no way generous, mostly just keeping in line with the much needed rise in minimum wage. This preschool is such a wonderful place for our children to come, because of the staff. The committee will keep looking at the finances to see if it is possible to reflect the value of their work in their salaries a bit more. Also the way society values the work of early years education... all education, needs to change and we need a revolution....

At the end of last year, we had accrued a large surplus – due to a bumper year of fundraising, an increase in government funding rates and not spending much, due to a left over sense of being in deficit from previous years. This has made it possible for us to invest quite a bit in the preschool fixtures and fittings - so we now have a super new trampoline that should last for many years, new flooring, newly decorated room, lots of new furniture tables and chairs, role play furniture, big toys, climbing equipment outside, and a new music station. We still have big ambitions to improve the kitchen area and to get a funky new surface on the ground outside. We obviously need to apply for major funds to do these pieces of work. If there is anyone who has special skills in funding applications please join the committee!

Fundraising is one of the main jobs for the committee. As well as major projects, we need to raise extra funds so that we can buy new toys, and books, go on trips (we went to washingpool farm again this year), have Christmas and leaving parties and so on. This year has been a bit quieter than last – both from the committee as well as the parents actually attending some of the events. There have been many lovely events though and we certainly have had some fun putting them on. I would like to say a big thank you to the committee members who put lots of work into these events –

Rhona Passmore, Lee Stork, Anita Brake, Ruth Wakefield, Bryony Brock, Alyssa Simpson, Melanie Weller, and Dee Lanning... as well as to all of the staff members who also give so much of their own free time to make the events happen as well as many other fundraising activities they organise... . The Ashley wood photos, sponsored trike rides and so on.

Obviously Lee has gone through the events and the money that they have raised. I need to say a special thank you to Emma Whitlock who did the Boxing Day swim last Christmas..... that is two years in a row now (I did it with another mum the year before). I believe the rule is that once something has happened 3 years in a row it is officially a tradition... so really hoping that someone is up for it this year???

The preschool is a community organisation not a business. The Autumn Fayre, Easter Egg Hunt, Teddy Bears Picnic, Quiz & curry night they are all to raise money, but they are also lovely events. It's good to make a preschool community, to join in with preschool life, spend some time chatting with one of the preschool teachers while running the tombola or answering daft questions with them or other parents at the quiz. It's great for kids to see their class mates outside of school. It's good to get to know the kids and the parents of the kids your children play with at preschool. It's good to have fun together and it's good to make fun things happen together. I was really pleased that so many people turned up to the play-park meet-up the other weekend. I've also spoken with many of you at the taster session last summer. It feels like a very good group of families. I reckon it's going to be a great year for the committee and for fundraising fun. We will come to sorting out the new committee shortly.

Finally though I need to say an enormous thank you to Kathryn and all of the staff who work so hard and put so much into their relationships with the children; helping them learn how to play, how to learn, how to be with other children, and adults: getting them ready for school and for life. They pay so much attention to our children, observing them so closely, documenting it thoroughly, tracking their progress and tailoring activities to help each individual develop to their full potential. And then every year they have to say goodbye to these children! My insight into this preschool over these last two years of being chair has been a complete revelation. I wish they could keep the children until they were 10 years old really. You all do an amazing job and we really appreciate it, as do the children. Thank you.