

AGM 16th October 2018 - Play Leader's Speech

Last year we welcomed two new members of staff, Naomi and Ruken to our established team to cover Emma and Nicole who went on maternity leave. Denise also made the decision to retire.

We had a very positive year, the new staff quickly settled into their new roles and worked hard to fit into the team. Existing staff were very supportive and welcoming and in a few weeks we were soon settled working as a team. The ten children who had a change of key person groups quickly adjusted to the new staff. We decided to go down to three key person groups Green (myself and Nikki), Blue (Shirley and Lisa) and Red (Sally and Naomi) with Ruken supporting. My personal thanks to all the staff for their continued hard work, dedication and commitment especially in what could have been a difficult year. Although we were sad that Nicole and Emma decided that they would not return from maternity leave, we were very pleased that we could keep Naomi and Ruken who have been a breath of fresh air to our experienced team.

Due to Nikki working more and more hours in the room and not having enough time for the admin role, we employed Jo Hughes who took on this role from Easter. This is working out well and Jo currently works three days a week which has improved the smooth running of the Pre-school allowing all staff and especially myself and Nikki to focus on the children.

This year Ruken undertook a foundation degree in Early Years, Nikki took her Level 2 Forest training and all staff undertook Early Years Maths training, Observation, Planning and Assessment training and Pic-d Speech and Language training. We also attended our regular training and updates that we have to complete in line with the Early Years Foundation Stages. All this training has favourably impacted on the children's learning and development.

To further enhance our provision we started having Declan from Funkee Monkees, to provide a music and dance workshop once a week for our children in the preparing for school groups. Forest School is now happening weekly and we have been doing a lot more creative activities ourselves as well as inviting Jo from Oops Toddler Art in to run sessions and we have really seen the benefits in our children's developments from these fantastic opportunities.

We were full for the academic year with a waiting list. We had 67 children on roll, 31 going on to six different primary schools and so far the feedback has been that all are settled and doing well.

From our parent feedback questionnaires, we made drop off and collection times easier allowing parents to drop off from 8.45am to 9.15am and to pick up from 2.45pm to 3.15pm as well as the usual breakfast and afterschool clubs to help parents who pick up from primary schools across town. As a result, we have also changed our morning and afternoon key person circle times to avoid any disruption. This has greatly improved the running of the sessions and has proved popular with parents.

Overall we have had very positive comments about the time children have had with us particularly the quality of teaching and support from the staff and the welcoming, family atmosphere. Some parents were keen to see more pictures of activities on the website and Facebook page and information about what is coming up the following week. This is now starting to happen as Jo finds the time to do this.

At the end of the year we spent a lot of money to improve the pre-school environment. The staff worked very hard at the end of the term to sort, pack and organise everything ready to move into storage. Our thanks to Colfox School for providing a room for us to put everything in and thanks to Chris Hughes, Lee Stork, Gary Prowse and Paul Cosser for their hard work and to the staff for theirs. During the summer holidays the pre-school room was transformed with new floor, walls painted, new changing unit and water play trough. Brian's room was moved outside to provide more floor space to enable us to have the indoor climbing frame up all the time and a new outdoor climbing frame and trampoline were installed. We also invested in new tables, chairs, art supplies unit, painting easel and wooden blacks. Although a lot of work and effort and a lot of money, I'm sure you'll agree the results are worth it and we have already seen an improvement in children's physical development, their personal and social skills in how they are settling and how they are accessing the room.

We have had a very hard working committee who did lots of fundraising and supportive work to raise funds for the pre-school. I would particularly like to thank Rhona, Lee, Anita, Ruth, Bryony, Alyssa, Melanie, Dee and Emma for all their hard work in attending meetings and organising events and especially Jo for all her work, forward thinking ideas and commitment to the pre-school even when she no longer had a child attending the setting. Jo has also come in with her other hat on to carry out art workshops which the children have really benefited from and we as a setting have really learnt and changed our creative practice.

Finally, I would like to thank the parents who support us by helping in lots of ways, going on the committee, buying raffle tickets, donating prizes, making cakes, coming to parent consultations and attending events but particularly for sending us such lovely children.

Kathryn Cosser

16.10.18