

Bradpole Preschool Chair's Report 2021

This is my third and final Chair's report for Bradpole Preschool! It has been an absolute pleasure to be involved.

Despite the challenges of Covid, Preschool has continued to be a place of safety, security and normality in the last year. There are many happy and settled children. For the majority of children who have now moved on to Primary School, despite the disruptions, they were ready and had been well prepared by the wonderful staff. They left with many happy memories of their time at Preschool!

We are very fortunate to have a team of dedicated professionals. The relationships they build with the children and families are the key to success – and this is most definitely a strength. Undoubtedly Covid has had an impact on the young children at Preschool, and I would like to recognise the flexibility of the staff and the support they offer children who have been through such varied experiences in the ongoing Pandemic. It is clear in all their interactions that they care. Their cheerful enthusiasm throughout what has been an incredibly challenging time, is reassuring for parents and children and I would like to thank them.

There has been some staff turnover this year – Hannah has moved back into the nursing world, and Naomi has joined her fiancé in Cardiff. Having worked with Kathryn and Sally on the interviews for new staff, I can safely say that this experienced pair are very attuned to just what the needs of the Preschool are, what works well in the setting and very quickly work out what type of training new individuals might need. In the Spring, Jemma joined the team and quickly settled in. Ellie and Serena interviewed in the summer. Ellie already has level 2 Childcare qualifications and is undertaking further training, while Serena is an apprentice. The positive attitude of all 3 towards Bradpole Preschool and their desire to work with our little ones shone through at interview and we wish them well.

As most of you will know, Bradpole Preschool is a Charity, and while there is government funding for Preschools, this just about covers the basics. Paying our staff wages that show we value them is very important to the Committee – and we wish to retain them. It's one of the more tricky discussions the Committee holds yearly and we are glad of the support of Administrator Jo Hughes and the advice of Kathryn in enabling us to work out what can be done. Treasurer Lee will support the new Committee as there are further challenges ahead with National Minimum Wage increases – these will impact finances.

The Committee's efforts do make a difference: new equipment and replacing worn items is an ongoing need that fundraising supports and I would like to thank all the Committee of the past year, who have worked hard to think of alternate ways of fundraising when face to face events have not been possible. A successful Christmas campaign and summer raffle of promises, brought in some much needed funds and several of us were able to assist with the end of Preschool party for the older group.

Thankyou, in particular, to Joanna Broom, who has been a crowdfunder whizz! (She has offered to help the new committee to use crowdfunder if they would like to!) You will have also noticed that there is a parents Bradpole Preschool Facebook page and a wider community page now, so we can keep our community updated. There are so many friends, past parents, grandparents, uncles, aunties and well-wishers, it shows what a well thought of place the Preschool is! Joanna has also looked at the Preschool website, which is something Kathryn would like to be able to update more easily and regularly.

Sianne Page-Smith, our outgoing Vice Chair, thank you also. Sianne this year organised a summer raffle of promises – parents donated time or a gift – she also designed and helped to organise the build of the long awaited and much needed new Preschool Kitchen – following the Christmas campaign that finally got us to the total needed! It looks amazing and I know Kathryn and the team are enjoying this facility.

Luckily Emily, our outgoing secretary, will stay on the committee – and that's brilliant as she is a wonderful enthusiast and source of ideas – and she'll share all her knowledge and resources with our new Secretary!

Ed Bailey designed and built a wonderful garden planter which he and Jemma organised and raffled, again through crowdfunder. This paid for the new washing machine at Preschool – no longer does Kathryn have to traipse home all the Preschool washing! There are more to thank – Mandy Pearson organised the Christmas nativity filming and production with her husband – so many families enjoyed this – and would have missed out otherwise! Claire and Phil Ackerman organised food for the Summer party, with generous donations of sausages from Framptons and bread, lollies etc. from Morrisons. What a fantastic group of people!

I would like to end by saying that while many of us are moving on, we will continue to support the Preschool – and indeed the new Committee – who we hope will come with a set of 'fresh eyes' and new enthusiasm.

Helen Fry

Chair (2020-2021)