

Newsletter January 2009

Term & Holiday Dates

Term 3:	Wednesday 7 th Jan – Friday 13 th Feb 2009
February holiday:	Monday 16 th Feb – Friday 20 th Feb 2009
Term 4:	Monday 23 rd Feb – Friday 3 rd April 2009

Dates for your Diary

Committee Meeting:	7:45pm, Tues 24 th Feb 3 Horseshoes, back room
Cake stall:	9am Saturday 21 st March, Bob's Corner, outside Chemist,
AGM:	7:45pm Wednesday 1 st April, Parish Hall

In This Issue: Initial Questionnaire Feedback, Grant Application Success, Rebuild of Youth Hall, Changes to Daily Routine, Links with Benson Primary

Ali Wood writes:

A belated Happy New Year to everyone! First of all, congratulations to Lisa Wells for the birth of little Charlie. We have all enjoyed meeting him!

Once again, a very busy start to this term for the committee and staff. Spurred on by our Small Capital Grant success, we have been very busy submitting an application for a grant to rebuild the Youth Hall!

A warm welcome to our new children this term who are Oscar Smith, Ella Harris, Isaac Peach, Finlay Jones and my little boy, Lewis Wood. We look forward to getting to know you well over the next few weeks. I know you will have a wonderful time with us!

Questionnaire Feedback

Many thanks to everyone who completed the questionnaires we sent out in November last year. Your feedback has given us some new ideas for improvement as well as confirming that you are happy with our pre-school. We are currently preparing a full feedback letter and action plan to share with you in the next few weeks. I can reveal, however, that the main message we received loud and clear is that we need to turn our attention to improving the Youth Hall. We have been trying to work closely with the Parish Council (our landlord) for almost a year now, attending Halls Parish Council meetings and meeting in person with Councillors regarding repairs and improvements. As you will realise, the building has many limitations and so the committee decided that the way forward has to be to canvass for a rebuild. Which brings me on to.....

Early Years Capital Grant Application

To recap, Oxfordshire has received £7.8million funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families to make improvements in early years provision. The Early Years Grant is available to develop the learning environment for the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is probably a once in a lifetime opportunity for pre-schools to fund major improvements and premises replacements.

Benson Community Pre-school



For all that haven't heard yet, we were notified in December that we have been successful in securing the maximum Small Capital Grant of £5,000 from Oxfordshire County Council. With this money, we will be developing an enclosed outside area for our children with a slide, planters, a pergola, balance beams and a play house. Our application will be used as a showcase example to other settings for the next round of funding. The total cost of our project is £8,000 so we need to add an additional £3,000 ourselves. Please support our fundraising in any way you can or even better why not give the pre-school a donation towards the costs? All you need to do is write a cheque and put it in the cashbox! Easy!

You might have noticed as part of this project, our shed is already in position. Thank you to Mary Evans Picture Library (www.maryevans.com) for this kind donation and also to Dave Barnes, Simon Jarvis and Alan Harris for the time they gave up one weekend to put the shed together – not an easy job, I know! Thank you also so much to Rev. Andrew Hawken and the Trustees of Benson C of E Primary School for their support and approval of our plans.

Onwards...With the Parish Council's full support, we have just submitted a note of interest to OCC for a Large Capital Grant to cover the costs of rebuilding the Youth Hall. If we are successful, we hope that the building work will start summer 2010. It is now up to OCC whether we make it on to the short list after a full assessment of all the premises that have been proposed for improvement. I would like to thank Jane Benetto for all her hard work on completing the application form.

AGM

The AGM is planned for Wednesday 1st April and we will once again be tempting you along with free wine and nibbles, our Easter Raffle draw and an opportunity to hear about all the great things our pre-school has achieved in 2008 as well as our plans for 2009.

In addition, as usual we will be electing a new committee at the AGM. We expect that some key committee positions will need to be filled so we are keen for new committee volunteers to come forward now to learn the ropes. If you are interested in joining the committee please let me know (Ali Wood, phone number 824398 or at alison@woodclan.org.uk) or why not just come along to our next committee meeting to be held on Tuesday 24th February 2009 at the 3 Horseshoes Pub to find out a bit more about what we do.

Fundraising News

I hope you enjoyed our pamper evening held in November. The good news is that in addition to feeling pampered, we also managed to make nearly £800 profit that will go towards our outdoor play area. A great big thank you to Liz Copping, Dee Harris and Rachel Ordish for all their hard work in making this event such a success.

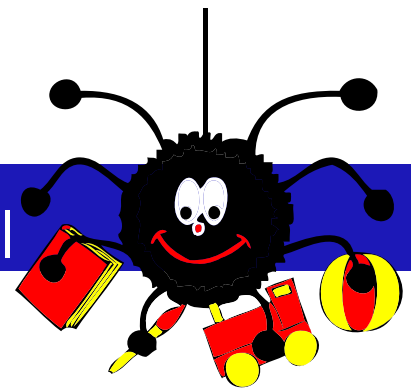
Our next fundraiser is our Mother's Day Cake stall on Saturday 21st March. Please mark this date in your diary and reserve some baking time a few days ahead of the event to make lots of cakes for us to sell!

The fundraising committee is also starting to plan for our Easter Raffle to be drawn at our AGM and will be asking parents and their employers and local businesses to provide raffle prizes. More information will be available soon.

Parent Help Update

The committee is currently reviewing the parent help duties and is likely to make some changes that will mean you will hopefully be able to be more involved in the setting on your parent help day rather than stuck in the kitchen making toast and washing dishes. Watch out for more information on this in the coming weeks. We will inform you of the changes before making the change and will be updating the parent help instruction sheets to help you.

Benson Community Pre-school



Cass Prior writes:

The topics for this term are:

People who help us – (Until 30th January) So far we have learnt a lot about the police, ambulance, fire and coast guard services. We are looking forward to a visit from a local GP and police officer at pre-school.

Our Family – During this topic we will be talking about our families and extended families. We will be learning about relations and also talking about our pets!

If any parents would like to come in and talk to the children about their career for either of the topics, please speak to me (Cass). Also, during our family topic, we will be talking about our pets, and so if any families have friendly animals that they would like to bring in to show the children, please let one of the staff know. We would also love to have visits from aunts, uncles, grand-parents or any other family members! Your support is greatly appreciated. Please don't forget that the weekly planning relating to the topic is always on display on the planning board.

Changes to Daily Routine

Some of you may already know that we have adapted our daily routine in answer to some comments that there was too much free play and not enough structure in our sessions. As a result, we have now introduced a new group time at 9.20am.

In this group time we encourage the children to talk about what they have been doing at home, and on a Monday we discuss all of the fun things we did at the weekend. This discussion is then turned into an adult-led activity where the children are encouraged to draw and write about their weekends. You can see the children's drawings on the display board in the Pre-School.

During the new morning group time we are also discussing the days of the week, months of the year and the daily weather. The children are now also invited to select which resources they would like out for the morning and we also select a daily helper at this time. This is very popular with the children!

We are now also changing the resources at around 10am or sooner if the children decide that they would like to explore something different. This is working extremely well as the children have access to a larger range of activities and they are now able to choose things that they are interested in!

The Rainbow room is being used every day for mark-making (writing and drawing) activities and quiet focused activities. The children also have access to the computer in this room, although we also bring it into the main room for some sessions so that all of the children have the opportunity to use the ICT resources.

We are still focusing on our phonics this term and the children are becoming very familiar with the rhymes for each letter and sound!

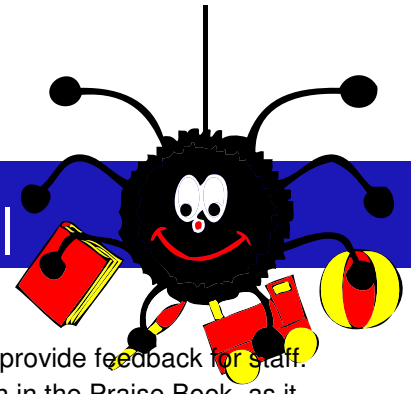
The children are very excited by all of these changes and we are all working very hard to implement them to ensure a higher level of care and education for the children. Our qualified teacher, Sara Ogden, is now working on a Wednesday morning in addition to a Monday and Friday to help me make further improvements.

Which bring us onto our next item and feedback from parents.....

Parents Table

You may have noticed our new parents table by the front door. This table has the cash tin and signing in sheet for any payments made. It also contains our comments book and collection book for children being collected by a different adult.

Benson Community Pre-school



In addition to this, we also have a dedicated **Praise Book** on this table for parents to provide feedback for staff. Even if you notice a little area or idea of Pre-School that you like, **please** jot this down in the Praise Book, as it makes a massive difference to the staff to know that parents agree with and notice our ideas!

New Progress Records

As you all know, all of the children have their own development record which is completed by each child's key-worker. With the introduction of the new Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, we have a new layout for these records. We are working closely with the Early Years advisory teacher to ensure that this new design covers all areas of the curriculum and we will be implementing these for each child in the near future.

Links with Benson Primary School

Due to the great successful last year in our phonics teaching collaboration with Benson Primary, we are picking this initiative up again this year. Initial feedback from the school indicated a marked improvement in entry level phonics and pencil control compared with previous years. We have invited Foundation Stage Coordinator and Reception Teacher, Jo Tanner, to visit us on Wednesday 4th February to share foundation stage teaching techniques with our staff and we will also be arranging for our staff to spend some time up at the school.

Webster's Library

We are very excited to now have Webster's Library up and running. All of the children are really enjoying choosing books to take home in their new clear zip bag and have been bringing the books back to Pre-School telling us all about mummy and daddy reading to them and some parents have even been re-enacting the stories at home! Fantastic! We have also been carrying out activities with the children relating to the books they have read. Everyone has drawn some fantastic pictures and written about the characters in the books! You can see these on display at pre-school.

Fruit

Could I please remind all parents to bring in fruit for the children to have for their morning snack. Our fruit bowl has been looking a bit empty lately! We are unable to give the children strawberries or kiwis, but other than this we would love to give the children a wide variety to try.

Finally, I would just like to thank all of the parents for their on-going support during this time of change and for welcoming me so warmly into the Pre-school. Your positive feed-back and willingness to get involved with the Pre-School means so much to myself, the committee and the staff. We are so excited about aiming to make the pre-school outstanding and truly appreciate the help and support from all of the parents.

Kind regards and best wishes for 2009!

Alison Wood

Cass Prior

Chair

Manager