

Newsletter March 2009

Term & Holiday Dates

Term 4:	Monday 23 rd Feb – Friday 3 rd April 2009
April holiday:	Monday 6 th – Friday 17 th April 2009
Term 5:	Monday 20 th April – Friday 22 nd May 2009
Late Spring Holiday:	Monday 25 th – Friday 29 th May 2009

Dates for your Diary

Cake stall:	9am Saturday 21 st March, Bob's Corner, outside Chemist
AGM:	7:45pm Wednesday 1 st April, Parish Hall
Wriggly Roadshow:	23 rd April (you have been notified of your child's assigned session)

In This Issue: New Chair Still Required, Guest Speaker at our AGM, Youth Hall Rebuild Update, Morning Snack Changes, Book of the Week, Cupboard Clear Out!

Ali Wood writes: Hope everyone is enjoying the sunshine; spring is definitely here! Further to my letter to you on 4th March, this will be my last newsletter to you as I am not intending to stand as Chair at the AGM on 1st April. I hope to be elected as Vice-Chair to support the incoming Chair so I won't be disappearing completely! I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for all their support over the last 2 years. A special thank you also to Cass, our Manager. The changes and improvements she has implemented in the last few months have been phenomenal. Our Pre-school is a truly wonderful place!

On a more serious note, I have to let you know that no one has come forward yet to take my place and unfortunately that is putting the Pre-school at risk as we legally need a Chair. Please consider stepping forward maybe even to share the role with a friend or even your husband! Read on to find out more about our new structural plans for the committee and how this will lessen the load for the new Chair!

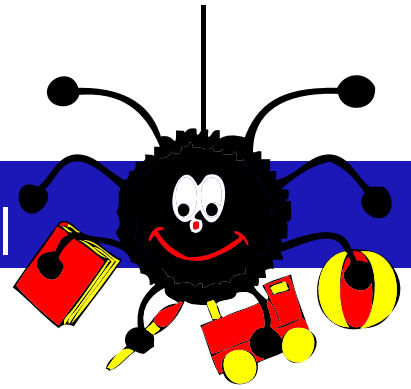
Committee Restructure

Our committee restructure plans, to be implemented after the AGM, mean that the work load will be spread across more people making the job of Chair less onerous. We intend having 4 sub-committees each with a designated leader:

- Finance (invoicing, purchasing, admissions tracking, salaries, grants, funding) lead by Vicki Jarvis
- Staff / HR (staff development, training, recruitment) lead by Cass Prior who will be joining the committee as a staff member under our new constitution
- Strategic support (development planning, policies, self evaluation, curriculum) lead by Ali Wood (me!)
- Fund raising (leader will vary depending on the event)

This will leave the Chair with strategic oversight, ad-hoc decisions, point of contact for Manager / Deputy, Ofsted liaison (along with the Vice-Chair) and organising committee meetings. Not too much really!

Benson Community Pre-school



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.

As you know, we were successful in being awarded a small grant of £5,000 and we are just waiting for the funds to be transferred from the Trustees of Benson C of E Primary School (who received the money as the owners of the land). If you would like to get involved in helping finalise the playground design please speak to Cass, Sara or myself so we can get you involved in the planning meeting.

Yesterday, I heard from Oxfordshire County Council that our large grant application to fund a rebuild of the Youth Hall has now been assessed along with 27 other proposed projects in round 1. We have been informed that before a short list can be drawn up for the councillors approval, OCC will need to organise a surveyor's report for some projects and for others assess project risks in terms of whether the project is capable of being managed. The Early Years Development Manager at OCC will be contacting me shortly requesting more information to support our proposal. In the meantime, members of the committee will be meeting with the Parish Council to form a working group to support the next step. Again, if you are interested in helping with this, please let us know, as this isn't a small undertaking!

AGM

The AGM is planned for Wednesday 1st April 7:45 in the **Parish Hall**. I am pleased to tell you that Jo Tanner, Reception Class Teacher at Benson Primary will be our Guest Speaker this year. She will be talking to us about how to prepare your child for school and will also touch on the phonics collaboration we have implemented with the Primary School.

Fundraising News

Don't forget our cake stall Saturday 21st March – ie tomorrow! Its not too late to bake a few cakes, just bring them down to the stall at 9am in the morning.

You will also now be in receipt of your raffle tickets. Please try your best to sell all tickets from both books and ask for more if you need them. Let's try to beat last years total of £915! If everyone sells all their allocated tickets that will bring in £1,000 that can go towards developing an even better Pre-school playground!

Cass Prior writes:

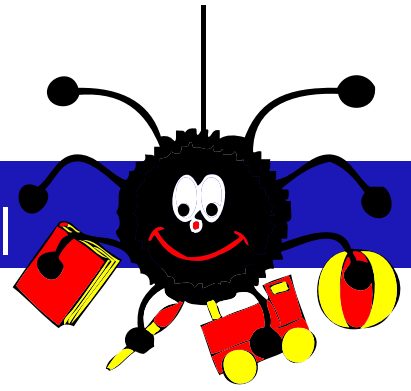
Topics

We have recently finished our topic on Mini-beasts. We really enjoyed looking for a variety of creepy-crawlies in the garden and we found lots of opportunities during the topic to talk about the colours, sizes and textures of different mini-beasts. We are really looking forward to the Wriggly Road-show on 23rd April and seeing all of the different creatures that we have been talking about!

Growth/ Easter– During this topic we will be talking about how and why things grow. This topic is closely related to Spring time and so we will be focusing on the growth of plants, animals and ourselves!

We will be doing lots of exciting activities, one of the mummies is going to come into Pre-School to help us make fresh bread! Yum! We will also be exploring lots of different senses, we will be taking part in an activity

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to smell lots of different things that grow to see if we can identify them and we will be using our touch to see if we can guess what is inside our sensory baskets.

If any parents have an idea for an activity that they would like to share with the children, please speak to Cass. As we will be talking about growth, if any parents have any animals that they would like to bring in, eg. A cat and or kitten, we would love for them to visit the Pre-School.

Please don't forget that the weekly planning relating to the topic is always on display on the planning board.

Children's books

As you know, we often fill in the children's book to give you some personalised details of what they have been doing that day. We would really appreciate it if you could sign or make a comment so that the staff know that you have received their feedback.

Front Door

As you may have seen, we no longer have a red mat by the front door at the beginning or end of a session. It was decided that the tatty mat was more of a hazard than the door threshold itself, so please be careful when going through the door with your children.

Praise Book

We have received some lovely comments in our praise book, so please take the time to have a look at the feedback from other parents and possibly add some of your own!

New Progress Records

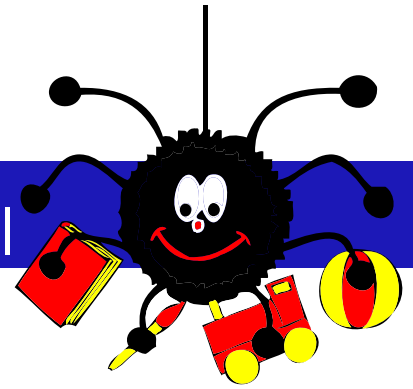
We have now consulted with the Early Years Teacher regarding the new progress records. We are currently in the process of making a new folder for each child and training the staff on how to use the new records. They will be up and running soon, so please feel free to ask about taking your child's progress book home so that you can see all of the progress made at Pre-School. They are a work-in-progress and it will take time to fill them with observations, but we will also be focusing on making them far more personal by including photos and special art work!

Morning snack

Thank you to all the parents who have been bringing in lots of lovely fruit for the children since our reminder in the last newsletter. Please keep doing this as after discussing preferences with the parents and committee, we have decided that after the Easter break we will no longer be giving the children toast and will just offer fruit and a drink instead. It was felt by the majority of parents that it was unnecessary for the children to have toast shortly after arriving at Pre-School as they had not long had breakfast and it often meant that they were not hungry at lunch time. Our plan is to involve a few children each session in helping to prepare the fruit, like we did with the toast toppings, thus hopefully stimulating a healthy appetite for the fruit they are preparing! This was an Ofsted recommendation in our last inspection.

Links with Benson Primary/ Phonics

Further to our meeting with Mrs Jo Tanner from Benson Primary School, some of the staff have visited during a phonics sessions at the school. This has given us some great ideas on how to further develop our
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own phonics programme. We will be dividing the groups so that each child is able to grasp the concept at his or her own pace. The younger children will have a phonics group time in the rainbow room, where they will be able to take part in games and activities to help develop their skills and the older children will spend time focusing on our jolly phonics programme which is more suited to their age group.

Book of the Week

We have now introduced a book of the week. Each week a topic-related story book is chosen which we will focus on for the week by ensuring all of the children have the opportunity to share the same story and take part in activities relating to the story. The children are really enjoying this and look forward to hearing the story at the end of the session, and often join in as they know the lines off by heart!

Storage cupboard

Our big storage cupboard has been transformed! We have rearranged the cupboard into sections to ensure easy access for the staff and a full inventory has been created for the staff to use as a planning aid to ensure that the children get to explore a huge variety of resources! As I'm sure you all know from toy cupboards at home, often the best games and activities somehow end up forgotten at the back!

We currently have so many resources that are very similar, so we will be placing some of the surplus toys and games by the front door during the sessions and so if you would like to buy any of them we would appreciate a donation so that we can purchase some different resources!

Display Boards

You may have noticed that we have started using a variety of medias on our display boards. This makes them far more interesting to look at for the children and parents. We have also started putting the activity plans on the boards that relate to the pieces of art so that you can become involved in the processes that we use to create the final masterpieces!

We have our weekend news board which is updated every Monday and is where the children share all of the exciting things that they have done over the weekend. We now also have a celebrations board where we learn about a variety of cultural celebrations - we have recently taken part in Chinese New Year, St. Patrick's Day and Red Nose Day!

Thank you once again to all of the parents for their wonderful support and brilliant feedback regarding the recent changes at Pre-School! It has been a very progressive, fun and fantastic term and we look forward to another one next term!

Kind regards

Alison Wood

Cass Prior

Chair

Manager