



NEWSLETTER

September 2023

Stepping Stones Pre-school
Playgroup,
Avonway Community Centre
36 Shaftsbury Street.
Hampshire. SP6 1JF
Tel: 01425 653517

Welcome Back!

It is lovely to see all the children back at pre-school, we do hope you all had a lovely summer. On the last day of term we celebrated our older children moving on to 'big school'. It is always with mixed feelings, sad to say goodbye but excited for them as they start their next big adventure. We wish them all well and look forward to hearing how they are getting on.

It is lovely to see so many of you returning. Some of you are new to Stepping Stones and we send you a particularly warm welcome and hope you and your children enjoy your time with us. Building up a good relationship with parents is very important and we welcome your feedback and suggestions. Please come and chat to staff whenever you need.

Introduction to staff-

Key workers-

Each of your children are allocated a key worker who will be responsible for helping them to settle in and getting to know their interests. They will also work with you if you have any concerns.

Lead Practitioner- Sam Lealman has overall responsibility for staff and children and is our lead for Health and Safety, Special Educational Needs and Safeguarding.

Deputy- Emma Thompson assists Sam in her role and is also a contact for Health and Safety and Safeguarding

SENCO- Sam Lealman and Vicky Earth-Nicklen are our Senco leads.

Classroom Practitioners- Janet Mortimer, Lorraine Smallwood, Lyn Belenger, Debbie Simpkins, Vicki Earth- Nicklen, Alison Rust and Jenny Elbro all bring their own skills and experience to Stepping Stones and we are also pleased to support Janine Slattery in her Early Years Apprenticeship.

Out-door Learning- Sam is also our Outdoor Learning Leader.

Administrators- Clare Paterson has responsibility for the pre-school administration which includes the children's funding and is assisted by Helen Chubb

Parent Committee- Our Parent committee, Chaired by Lorraine Thompson plays an important part in our running as well as raising funds for resources and equipment. We are always looking to welcome new parents. It is also an opportunity to make new friends and get to know your children's friend's parents! If you are interested in helping in any way, please let a member of staff know.

Lunches- All children are welcome to stay for lunch. This can be included in our funded hours. However, we do ask that your child is able to sit and eat their lunch without getting

up and wandering about please, otherwise we will be unable to let them stay. Lunchtimes are sociable time where we all sit and eat nicely together.

Please bring a healthy balanced lunch. No sweets or chocolate bars and **strictly no nuts** please. This included products that may contain nuts such as Nutella. Also, please ensure that small objects such as grapes are cut in quarters or long strips. Thank you for your support.

Naming children's belongings- We kindly ask that you please label your child's coats, hats, gloves, lunchbox etc. It makes our life much easier when we are trying to match children and items. Thank you

Water bottles- Please can all children bring in a named water bottle in addition to anything you may put in with their lunch. We will leave the bottles on the table and the children will be able to access them when they want to. Thank you.

Nappies and nappy bags

Please can we ask you to put nappies and nappy bags into the children's bags if required. We do try to keep a stock of these items for accidents and we don't pass on the cost of these things to parents, as other settings do.

Notice Board-

We have put a notice board up by the gate so please keep an eye on it for any information. We also have a Parent Information File inside which parents are able to access. If there is a particular area that you would like advice on, please do ask. If we don't know the answer we will do our best to find out or point you in the right direction. We are also in the process of updating our website.

Funding- Thank you for completing the funding forms.

All children are eligible for 15 hours per week funding, starting the term after the child turns 3. Some 2-year olds are also eligible for the 15 hours funding and some 3- and 4-year olds are eligible for an additional 15 hours funding, taking it up to 30 hours in total. The deadline for the Autumn term funding was the 31st August so hopefully all who are eligible have done this.

Looking forward, It is important to note that if you think you may be eligible for 30 hours funding and would like to take it up, that you must apply and get your eligibility code before the end of December in order to claim it in the Spring term. We are also registered to take children for tax free childcare.

If you are interested in any of these schemes, please visit the government website: www.childcarechoice.gov.uk for more information or come and have a chat with a member of staff

Sessions/ Invoices- Please note that all our staffing is planned in advance according to how many children we have in. It is usually no problem to change your child's sessions, but we ask that you please give as much notice as you can as it may affect our staff/ child ratios. **If you normally pay for your child's sessions, we do still have to invoice you if your child is sick or on holiday unless you have given us more than two weeks' notice. Unfortunately this also includes those ad hoc days you may decide not to attend pre-school.** Again, this is because we have allowed for the correct number of staff to be in each session. Likewise, if your child is funded and is sick or absent, we may be obliged to inform Hampshire County Council as it may affect the funding received.

Sickness and absence-Please can you let us know if your child will be off sick or absent as we do miss them when they don't come in. In cases of sickness and diarrhoea, please allow 48 hours after the last occurrence before your child returns. This may seem like a long time but is taken from NHS guidance and is to avoid the spread of any sickness. If taking antibiotics, please keep children at home for 48 hours from when they start taking them in case they suffer from any side effects.

Contact details-Please let us know if there have been any changes to your contact / personal details over the holidays so that we can update our records. (Telephone numbers, address, change in surname etc.) It is important that we can contact you should we have need to. This may include any temporary changes to numbers for example, if you are working somewhere different for the day.

Polo-shirts-Maroon Stepping Stones polo-shirts are available to purchase for your children but it is optional. The cost is £10.50 for new shirts. We do have a few good quality second hand ones available too.

'Themes' - We try to follow the children's interests so please keep an eye out for any notices regarding themes. We also like to talk about anything topical with the children such as the changing seasons and any special events. If your child has a special interest at the moment, please let us know!

Improvements/ Fundraising- We have some big ideas to improve the outside play area for all our children and will be working with Avonway to do this. However, funds are tight with most of our funding and fee's we receive going on overhead costs. Therefore we are on a big fundraising drive this year. Watch this space for fundraising events such as our Halloween party. If you have any ideas or would like to get involved in helping us to fundraise, please come and have a chat- we would really welcome you.

Dates for your diary:

Autumn half term- Monday 23rd to Friday 27th October

Return to pre-school Monday 30th October

Halloween party- Tuesday 31st October (More details to follow)

Christmas holidays- Monday 18th December to Monday 1st January

Inset day (Pre-school closed) Tuesday 2nd January

Return to Pre-school Wednesday 3rd January

Spring half term- Monday 12th to Friday 16th February

Return to pre-school- Monday 19th February

Easter holidays- Friday 29th March to Friday 12th April

Inset day (Pre-school closed) Monday 15th April

Return to Pre-school Tuesday 16th April/ Wednesday 17th April

May bank holiday (Pre-school closed) **Monday 6th May**

Summer half term- Monday 27th to Friday 31st May

Return to pre-school Monday 3rd June

Last day of summer term- Friday 19th July

Inset day (Pre-school closed)- Monday 22nd July

Inset day (pre-school closed)- Tuesday 23rd July

Summer holidays- Wednesday 24th July to Friday 30th August