

Stepping Stones Pre-school Playgroup,

Avonway Community Centre

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NEWSLETTER

September 2020

**Welcome Back!**

It is so nice to see all the children back in pre-school. This year has been such a strange one for us all. We hope that all our families stayed well during the lockdown period and the holidays and that you have not been too adversely affected. In some ways the year has gone quickly but there has been so much that we all missed out on. We were able to welcome some of our children back in the summer term and despite some of the changes we had to make due to Covid, we believe that the children had a lovely time. Sadly, we could not have our usual Leavers Assembly but we were able to say a sad goodbye to lots of our older children. We hope that they are coping well with the transition to school and wish them all the best in this new and exciting stage in their life. We look forward to hearing how they are getting on.

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. At the moment we are unable to have parents in pre-school but if you have any questions, worries, suggestions or ideas please do speak to staff at the gate. If you would prefer a more private conversation, please email us or ring and we can arrange this.

**If your child is unwell-** We have attached some important advice for you regarding what to do if your child is unwell.

**Staff update-**

We are all very sad to be losing Lyn this term to retirement. (The children must have kept you young Lyn as it is hard to believe!)

Lyn has been our joint supervisor with Janet for the last 7 years but has been with Stepping Stones for 25 years. We really will miss her both on a personal and professional level. We hope that she will keep in touch and may return to help us out.

You may be aware that Janet officially retired in the Summer term. Luckily for us she has agreed to come in to help on a casual basis so we will look forward to seeing her and continuing to share her experience and knowledge.

Due to Covid, we have been unable to celebrate her retirement but watch this space. We cannot let Lyn and Janet both retire so quietly… there will be many children and families in the Fordingbridge area that remember them both fondly.

**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.

**Supervisor-** Lyn Belenger remains supervisor up to the October half term, along with Georgina. She also has responsibility for Health and Safety and Safeguarding

**Going forward,** Georgina Gilbert-Moss will become Supervisor. She also has responsibility for Special Educational Needs and Safeguarding

**Classroom Practitioners-** Alison Crook, Clare Gamble, Lorraine Smallwood and Sam Lealman all bring their own sets of skills and experience. Clare is also our **Forest Schools** co-ordinator.

**Administrator-** Clare Paterson has responsibility for the pre-school administration which includes the children’s funding.

**Parent Committee-** We are lucky to have a friendly parent committee, Chaired by Lorraine Thompson who play 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.

**Named 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.

**Naming children’s belongings-** We kindly ask that you please, 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.

**Dropping off at the gate-** Please can we ask that parents socially distancing at the gate as much as is possible.

**Forest Schools-** Forest Schools will run on a Wednesday this term. If you are interested in your child attending, please let a member of staff know as soon as possible. If you miss out this time, don’t worry as there will be other opportunities to attend throughout the year. If you are unfamiliar with Forest Schools, it is wonderful opportunity for children to learn in an outdoor environment. Clare is our qualified ‘Forest School leader’ and is also trained in childcare first aid. She will be assisted at Forest Schools by our Deputy Manager, Georgina and or Sam. Activities typically include leaf printing, making bird feeders, bark rubbing, bug hunting and cooking over the fire.

**Attending Forest Schools-** Please can we ask that if you have put your child’s name down to attend Forest Schools that they do so unless they are sick. It affects our ratios both at Forest Schools and in the classroom if you decide on the day that they would prefer to come into preschool. Thank you very much for your co-operation. If the weather is very bad or cold on the day we may make other arrangements but will keep you informed.

**Music / cookery lessons-** At the moment we have postponed these to limit the number of visitors to the preschool. We hope to resume them again in the near future, when we are able to.

**Notice Board-**

We have put a notice board up by the gate so please keep an eye on it for any information. Unfortunately, parents are unable to access the information in the parent folder but if there is child related advice you may need, please ask and we will do our best to 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. 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](http://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. I’m afraid 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.

**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-**We are in the process of changing our supplier so please bear with us while we sort this out

**‘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!

**Dates for your diary:**

This term we will be getting to know each other and talking ‘All about me’. We will be celebrating Harvest, Diwali, Bonfire night and Christmas**. Half term is Monday 26th to Friday 30th October.**