



Newsletter

January 2006

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Welcome to the start of the Spring term at Steventon Children's House! We hope you all had a very happy Christmas and enjoyed the break. After all the excitement of last term we are planning another with some new equipment, new children and lots of fun.

New starters

We look forward to welcoming Annabelle, Roxanne and Jack who will all be joining us this term.

Surestart Grant

This has enabled us to buy some Christmas presents for the school. These include gardening tools, a wider range of books, Montessori materials, art and craft materials and jigsaws. I have been searching for quality large scale construction materials, preferably made from natural materials, since March. I think I have sourced some and look forward to a demonstration this term. Thanks to the grant we are now able to plan further purchases to suit individuals and our project of the moment throughout the year.

The grant will also pay for Sally to undertake a Montessori course. There is a lot of work involved as it is more thorough than the standard NVQ courses, but I am sure she will do really well. I shall continue to attend training courses too as part of my professional development. The more we know and understand about children the happier they are, we will therefore always invest a significant amount in training.

Back up staff

The majority of our training takes place over the weekends or evenings. There are occasions however when we can not avoid a mid week slot. There may also be time when Sally or I are unable to work due to sickness or a family crisis, sometimes at very little notice. We are therefore grateful to Fiona McAlister who will stand in if I am away. Fiona is a fully qualified Montessori teacher.

A big thank you to Avril Lloyd, Maria's mum, who has agreed to stand in for Sally. Avril will be attending a Montessori seminar at the end of this month. The seminar is aimed at parents who wish to understand a little more about the Montessori approach. It is on Saturday 28th January just off Oxford Street in London. If you would like to accompany Avril or would like more details, please let me know.

Ofsted Inspection

Following our visit last term the morning of our Christmas show, they agreed to return another day, we expect a visit at the beginning of this term. This will take two days during which they will be asking parents questions to form part of the report. I hope you will be happy to oblige.

Early Years Education Grant

I attach a claim form with the invoice for all children born between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2002. This is like last term for a maximum of 55x2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hour sessions a term. Please can you return these completed forms as soon as you can.

Parent Questionnaires

Thank you for taking the time to complete these forms last term. There was no common consensus on any of the questions with a 50:50 split on most of them. The exception was the foreign language question. Most of you expressed an interest in Steventon Children's House offering 'lessons' in another language for the older children during an afternoon session. I will therefore incorporate this idea into the plans for the school and work towards this goal. I shall also consider your other comments during future planning. Thank you.

How many days in the week?

I am often asked by parents how many days their child should attend a week. The answer depends upon the child as their needs should always come first. A good guideline is the older the child the more days. We have a policy of a minimum of 3 mornings a week. Attending fewer days than this the child finds it difficult to settle, harder to form friendships and will make slower progress through the curriculum. I am happy to be more flexible for the youngest children at the moment, but as child numbers increase this will no longer be an option, except under very special circumstances.

Children's records

I am in the process of improving our record keeping system. Every child has their individual profile charting their progress towards the governments Early Learning Goals as they work through the Montessori curriculum. These or a summary of them will be forwarded onto the child's next school when they leave. I will use these as a base when discussing your child at a parents evening or to write a report. If you ever wish to see your child's profile, please let me know.

Project

We will be looking at '*change and growth*' this term. Planned activities include growing sweet peas and sun flowers ready for the summer term. Growing vegetables within a container where we can watch the roots grow. Looking for signs of Spring as well as looking at life cycles. Please bring in anything connected with the project for the children to show or talk about during circle time.

Continents boxes

We are in the process of putting together a box for each of the 7 continents. These will contain pictures, objects, clothes, smells etc. from that continent. Children will then be able to study and discuss the contents. They will notice similarities and differences between their way of life and environment and others as well as learning about different parts of the world and cultures.

If you travel through business or pleasure, please think of us and our continents boxes. Pictures, any objects, recipes etc. would be gratefully received. If you come across any children's clothes that are typically worn by the locals (and would fit our children), please bring them back and I will reimburse you.

Clothing

We do venture outside as often as we can and definitely if it snows! Please ensure children have sufficiently warm clothing, coats and boots at school. We do have a small selection of spare clothes but prefer the children to wear their own whenever possible.

Donations welcome

We are always looking for items such as egg shells (crushing and mosaics), milk bottle tops (collage and threading), corks (craft and keeping needles safe) pizza bases (sewing), old greeting cards (sewing and cutting exercises), unwanted bangles for stacking, small boxes and containers for junk modelling so please think of us before discarding.

We welcome visitors, especially those who would like to talk to us about their profession, religion or share a skill they may have for example. It helps us learn more about the world around us. Let us know if you are happy to come and talk to us.

Contact details

If you would like to talk about your child, have any queries or would like some information I can talk briefly at the beginning of the day, I am always free to talk for longer at the end of the session or can arrange an evening if that is more convenient.

We look forward to a fun and happy term

Marianne and Sally