

Newsletter January 2014.

Welcome back after Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Themes.

The theme for the first two weeks is “All About Me” and week four will be Chinese New Year.

The themes for the other weeks will be based on the children’s interests which will be decided during the half term. We will notify you of the themes on the parent’s notice board in the entrance hall.

As always we base our planning on the children’s interests. If your child has any particular interest that you think we can introduce into the nursery sessions, please let us know so we can incorporate them into the planning. Please let us know of any festivals or celebrations that your family participates in as we would like to mark these within our planning as authentically as possible using your own knowledge and experiences.

Week 1 All About Me

Learning Intention: Personal, Social and Emotional

Week 2 All About Me

Learning Intention: Communication and Language

Week 3 Children’s Interest

Learning Intention: Physical

Week 4 Chinese New Year

Learning Intention: Understanding the World

Week 5 Children’s Interest

Learning Intention: Expressive Arts and Design

Week 6 Children’s Interest

Learning Intention: Mathematics

Please remember that we like to provide a wide range of “messy” activities for the children so please dress your child in suitable clothing.

TERM DATES:

Spring Term:

Term begins on Monday 6th January 2014 to Friday 14th February.

Half term holiday club is for one week beginning 17th February.

Second half of the Spring term begins on Monday 24th February to Friday 4th April.

We will then open for the Easter holiday club.

Summer Term:

Term begins on Tuesday 22nd April to Friday 23rd May.

Nursery will be closed on May Day 5th May.

Half term holiday club is for one week beginning 26th May.

Second half of the Summer term begins Monday 2nd June to Friday 18th July.

We will then open for the Summer holiday club.

PAYMENT OF FEES

Little Hands preferred payment methods are direct bank payments or Childcare vouchers. Payments should be made within 2 weeks of the invoice date or a late pay fee of £20 will be added. Alternative payment arrangements (cheque or cash) or timings may be possible please speak to the nursery manager in advance

Direct Bank Payments

Fees can be paid directly into the nursery bank account either at a bank/post office or via Internet banking. The nursery bank details are:

Bank: HSBC

Sort Code: 401608

Account Number: 31615947

The payment should be referenced with your child's name and written notification emailed to janemarshall@littlehands.co.uk stating your child's name, payment amount and date payment has been made; this is essential to prevent payments being mistakenly attributed to the wrong family. If email is not an option the written notification can be given as a note/letter to the nursery manager.

Childcare Vouchers

Working parents can choose to pay using Childcare Vouchers if their employer is part of a voucher scheme. Voucher payments are popular as they are exempt of tax & national insurance deductions. The voucher company should be instructed to notify the nursery by e-mail when the payment is due so that individual payments can be correctly tracked.

Cheque payments

Cheques should be made payable to Little Hands Nursery.

Cheques are banked in the week following the payment period (two weeks after the invoice date.) Please note that cheque payments made outside the payment period may be not be banked until the following half term. Nursery will pass all bank charges incurred from un-cleared cheques to the parents.

E-mail address

Our e-mail address is lh-newton@btconnect.com if you would like to contact us in this way.

Website

We are currently redesigning our website and have taken some photographs of the nursery which include the children at play; we would like to include these images on the main pages for each nursery. We are also planning to upload our newsletters onto the website as well as a gallery of photographs of recent activities for you to access electronically. We will NO LONGER inform you when your child's photos are being used. If you would prefer your child not to be included in any of the photos then please let me know.

Entrance Hall

Please remember that the entrance hall is a common area which is used by other users of the hall.

Children should be supervised at all times and must not be allowed into the adjacent corridor, or to play on the glass door into the hall. Noise level should be kept to a minimum and other people need to be able to pass safely through at all times.

Bad Weather

Please remember that we like to go outside to play each day so please ensure that your child has suitable named clothing and footwear every day. Please bring a change of clothes for your child in case of accidents or if your child gets wet or dirty clothes during an activity. These can be left in a bag on their peg.

If you have any of our nursery clothes at home please return them to us as soon as possible as our supplies are running low!

Snow

There are circumstances which occur rarely, such as severe weather conditions, which may require the nursery day to be reconsidered or cancelled. It is possible that we cannot predict when these circumstances may occur. In cases of severe weather conditions it may not be possible for the staff to travel safely to the nursery. It may be advisable to ring the nursery to check that we are open before setting off from your homes. "Little Hands" will endeavour to provide an uninterrupted service to families whenever possible.

All About Me Folders

We will be making some small changes to the children's All About Me folders this term. The new summative records will be used for 50% of our existing children and all new children from the Spring term. We will be evaluating the new system to ensure that it is working ok during the next two terms. Please do not hesitate to speak to me if you have any concerns.

Communication Books

Communication books will be gradually phased out for our existing parents and not given to new parents unless they are requested. We will replace them with loose leaf sheets of paper for parents to send any information about their child into nursery. The completed sheets will be placed in the child's records under the relevant section and if appropriate used for their next steps.

Children In Need

Thank you to everyone who supported our fund raising efforts for Children In Need. We raised £73.13 by dressing up and selling cakes.

Thoughts and Reflections Box

Just to remind you of our thoughts and reflections box that is in the entrance hall. It is there for you to put in any concerns, thoughts or wishes you may have for the nursery and do not wish to discuss with the staff.

Sharing Skills

We would like to invite any parent, carer or relative to join us at nursery to share any particular skill you may have with the children. In the past we have had a mother who talked to the children about her new baby, a father who is a keen cyclist, a mother who was a fitness instructor, a mother who sang Spanish nursery rhymes and a father who is a dentist. They came in and talked to the children for a few minutes which all the children thoroughly enjoyed. Parents have also come in to share festivals and celebrations that their families participate in. If you would like to come into the nursery please speak to Sheila or Lisa to arrange a date and time.

Children's play

At the bottom of this newsletter is a piece that we have written about how we balance play based and structured activities within the nursery day to ensure that the children at Little Hands get the best possible start to their early years education. Please read it and feel free to ask me any questions.

Half Term Holiday Club

The half term holiday club will run for five full days from 8.30-4.30pm. As usual, all siblings over 2 years and under 8 years of age are welcome to join us during the holiday club.

During holiday club we plan sessions using the Early Years Foundation Stage as guidance. We have flexible planning so that we can plan and work with the children's current interests. If you have any ideas which we could use then please let us know.

The fees charged for the holiday club will be the same as term sessions and I am sorry but we will no longer be offering a discount for the holiday club as we are no longer covering the cost of the sessions. It will be at the manager's discretion to decide whether the sessions booked are viable. If you have any problems or if you require any information about holiday club please see Sheila or Lisa. A booking form is at the bottom of this newsletter to be completed and returned as soon as possible as we cannot guarantee places will be available.

Booking form for February 2014 - Half term holiday club.

I would like to book the following sessions:

Child's name.....

Monday 17th February: 8.30-9.00am 9-10am 10-11am 11-12am 12-1pm 1-2pm 2-3pm 3-4pm 4-4.30pm

Tuesday 18th February: 8.30-9.00am 9-10am 10-11am 11-12am 12-1pm 1-2pm 2-3pm 3-4pm 4-4.30pm

Wednesday 19th February: 8.30-9.00am 9-10am 10-11am 11-12am 12-1pm 1-2pm 2-3pm 3-4pm 4-4.30pm

Thursday 20th February: 8.30-9.00am 9-10am 10-11am 11-12am 12-1pm 1-2pm 2-3pm 3-4pm 4-4.30pm

Friday 21st February: 8.30-9.00am 9-10am 10-11am 11-12am 12-1pm 1-2pm 2-3pm 3-4pm 4-4.30pm

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What does your child learn at nursery...?

Our nursery day is carefully planned using guidelines from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum and methods that have been highlighted as beneficial to children's learning and development through research in early years education. Our planning is based on the individual child, using our knowledge of the children, together with your knowledge of your children, as we feel you are the ones who know them best. The children here at Little Hands learn through play, and play has been recognised as the most effective learning tool by many early years theorists over the years. These early years are seen as the most important where children develop their likes, interests and learn new skills. Our job is to use these likes, interests and skills to help children to grow and develop in independence and confidence, and this in turn will boost their self-esteem, opening up their curiosity and desire for learning so that this can be carried on throughout their whole lives.

The first part of our session is 'free play;' this is a carefully planned and supervised time where the learning is child led. Our role as practitioners is to observe and extend the children's learning using these observations to determine the children's individual needs. Observations are also used by the children's key workers to plan 'next steps' in individual children's learning. During free play the practitioners use their skills and knowledge to gently enhance children's self-chosen activities, this is done without interfering or changing them too much, and the purpose of this is to extend the children's current knowledge or skills offering new opportunities and experiences that they may not necessarily be able to access for themselves. This method of teaching is known as 'scaffolding;' it involves an adult or older child demonstrating skills to a child who will then repeat it by themselves. We see this happening quite often at Little Hands. This is largely due to our high staff to child ratio which means children can be given the freedom to explore in a safe environment. It is also due to our mixed ages of children during 'free play'. Here the older children can show off their skills and knowledge which develops their self-esteem and the younger children learn from the older children who they enjoy playing with.

The next part of the session is adult initiated; during this time the children participate in 'focus play' where the activities are more structured to develop their knowledge and skills. The children are grouped according to their age and abilities and all activities are planned with the children's abilities, likes and interests in mind. This means that the activities they access are age appropriate; for example the preschool children may participate in activities that involve sitting and being engaged in a task for a length of time that would not be suitable for a two year old.

There is much research and evidence on the value of balancing child led and adult initiated activities in this way, and this is recommended by early years experts and the EYFS. The value of free play is supported by evidence from research in brain maturation and psychology which found that even the youngest of children show curiosity, make choices and persist at tasks to reach a goal. Free play encourages children to take ownership of their learning and learn valuable skills in areas such as negotiation, problem solving, creativity and imagination, developing their independence and confidence and providing them with a positive approach to learning. Structured activities on the other hand can help children develop their concentration, and introduces them to new experiences that they may not normally choose to access.

At Little Hands the children are enjoying their learning through play while the practitioners are using their skills and experience to ensure that each child is accessing the opportunities available to them, opening up possibilities for new experiences and opportunities for learning and monitoring children's progress along the way. The methods we use for assessment and monitoring progress are linked to the EYFS, which is a legal document for all early years settings in the UK, which requires that children access and achieve in seven areas of learning to reach the Early Learning Goals of each area using the individual child's characteristics of learning.

Little Hands has also put together a leaflet which explains the welfare and educational requirements of the EYFS, detailing the seven areas of learning and the various progress checks that are made throughout your child's time in the Foundation Stage, which begins at birth and ends at the end of the reception year. We send this leaflet out with a "review" meeting letter when your child has been at nursery for a few weeks. If you have any questions or would like some more information, we would be more than happy to help so please speak to us. To put this together, we have used information from the Department for Education document on the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (2012) and also Nancy Stewart's book, *How Children Learn: The Characteristics of Effective Early Learning* (2011).

Children's early experiences can either enhance or spoil their future possibilities, so it is vitally important that we get it right. Allowing children the opportunity to become self-regulated learners can open up their disposition to learning. Too much structure can result in quashing children's imagination, possibly damaging their approach to future learning, making children passive learners who depend on rote learning and specific instruction, while too much freedom may limit learning as it may not provide children with opportunities to teach all things to themselves; some experiences and skills need to be learned from adults. European countries such as Sweden and Norway employ a more play based approach in their early years education, and their children start school later than in the UK, but comparisons show that these children later exceed the achievements of learners from a more rigid and structured style of teaching.