



Chairs report for AGM 15/12/2023

Hi, my name is Stuart and I have been the preschool Chair sinceThank you all for coming, we won't keep you long however part of our constitution is we must hold an annual AGM to report on the achievements of the group and we thought doing this today, with the hook of the Christmas fayre we may have more parents to report to!

Firstly, I'd like to welcome Kari Hodson, Katie Haigh and Nicola Montague who have managed to navigate the EY2 form and are now accepted as Trustees! I would also like to thank, Ian and Linda for continuing to support us on the committee. I'd also like to thank all the staff who work so hard in the interests of your children to provide consistent childcare and education.

Generally, things are going really well at Preschool. In this report I will outline what has happened for the academic year from September 2022.

Firstly, we were in a very difficult place in September. Karen Warmington left suddenly over the summer and we had to change, many ways, that we were working. To ensure all the children were safe and we had enough staff for ratios Ruth and Linda had to work predominantly with children and fit in Administration and Management tasks either out of hours or around the daily routine of preschool. It was pretty challenging.

At the beginning of October Linda resigned to explore a different role. This meant there were only 4 staff left, 3 qualified (Ruth, Sharon and Ali) with Jasmine as apprentice. The committee made a decision to raise wages significantly to retain current staff but also to be able to recruit qualified and experienced staff. There is a crisis in Early Years recruitment anyway and we were then disadvantaged further through being term time only and in a location, not that easy to travel to.

Luckily for us the new higher rate for a level 3 trained member of staff enticed Emily Williams to come and join us at the end of October! This was great as she is experienced and trained and has fitted really well into the team. Ruth, then was able to complete the admin tasks in the afternoons, whilst the children were asleep in the office.

We did also need to use Bank staff up until December to support the team, which was a big expense.

Because our salary bill was really high, we ran at a significant loss so in January we took on some new children to boost our income.

Just before Easter we managed to recruit another member of staff Lea Kloeppinger, who had nearly completed her level 3 apprenticeship, but was also experienced working in several different settings as an untrained member of staff. Knowing we were having Lea meant we took some more children on after Easter. We now had 35 children on roll.

The team has settled in really well and changed some ways of working which has really improved the daily routine and support for the children such as using the Hive to split the children in the morning for snack, introducing a physical group session prior to snack. Lunchtimes have been improved too with staff rotating to have a lunch break and children choosing calm focused activities straight after lunch before going into free flow play and children having naps.

Ruth has also taken on another two parttime members of staff (Neave, an Early Years Degree student from Brookes for one day a week, and Becca an experienced, trained level 3, previously a manager in a setting that has been closed down this year). This has really helped with certain days in Preschool.

We also have a placement student coming weekly from Abingdon and Witney college and have had work experience students from Matthew Arnold!

Training

Looking back at the year it seems remarkable that Ali and Ruth undertook and completed the Early Years Professional Development Program "Building on Success" funded through the Department of Education which took 6 months. It was a really good refresher training focusing on Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language and Mathematical development and we're really pleased that in the second round of this training Emily and Sharon are undertaking this until Easter. Lea has now qualified and Jasmine is about to complete this too.

Ruth has also this year, (since January) completed her level 3 SENCO qualification (funded by DfE). This qualification isn't mandatory for settings however it was a really good opportunity to ensure the role is professional and providing the best support for children and their families, attending our setting.

Ali is now our setting's Language Lead which involved training and cascading to the whole team.

As a setting we all re trained in Oral Health and became reaccredited as a "Healthy Smiles setting"

Its been a fantastic boost to the Team, to enable everyone to receive training as over the last few years it has been impossible.

Staff supervisions and Networking.

Ruth has managed to complete Staff termly. This is an opportunity to review CPD, consider Childrens needs and any safeguarding concerns. She has also managed to update all the settings policies and issue an employee handbook to all staff.

We have also contacted the other settings that children attend to form stronger links with our Early Years Community. Ruth still attends regular Networking meetings with other Oxfordshire Early Years Managers, with the aim of supporting each other, sharing ideas and gaining peer to peer support. She attends termly Managers briefings with Oxfordshire County Council Early Years Teams and safeguarding Network meetings, keeping our setting up to date with themes and initiatives locally and nationally.

We continue to work closely with the school, getting to know the a new Head Teacher and an Executive Head.

Parents visits

We have welcomed parents into the setting over the last year. We have had a photographer (although this was to take photos for parents) it was a great experience for the children. We also had “Chef Miconi” come and cook Pizza (a bit different to his job at Christ Church College!) We had a Children’s nurse come in and measure the children and listen to their hearts, as well as two grandmothers come and read stories (lots of them!) to small groups of children as well as play with them. And lastly, we had an Art Teacher (Dad) come and do printing with the children. Another Mum came in to play instruments and sing and move with the children.

Again, since covid we had become pretty closed off and this has been a great opportunity to share practice but make what we do, more visible to parents, and we definitely will continue to do this. I think this not only enriches our curriculum but enable staff to grow in confidence.

Transitions

This still works really well, with daily morning visits from Easter, to reception for children starting school. Then afternoon visits/ play, after half term. Mrs Claxton and Mrs Strange held an afternoon visit for parents to see the classroom and meet the teachers which was successful. Ali and Sharon also met Mrs Claxton to talk about our cohort and to review the baseline assessment which will help us consider our curriculum.

New families

We continue to accommodate as many families as we can and currently we have 35 children on roll., with 4 starting in January. There are many more children wanting places at Easter, and we have a very

healthy waiting list, especially with the proposed Early Years Funding for two-year children of working parents. We also took the decision to extend the wrap care to Mondays from September, meaning we are open 42 hours a week. Locally as one of the only settings to take two year olds and to provide preschool only wrap care means we are a popular choice for parents, not just whose children attend North Hinksey primary.

Staff hours and cleaning

After many months of poor service from the cleaners we trialled another company however this has not been successful and staff now undertake the cleaning at the end of their shifts. We will see how this goes and may look for an alternative solution in the future if it gets too much.

Finances

We did lose money over the financial year 22-23 £25k, it was a difficult start to the year, however we are working hard to not run at a loss this year. The funding for 3 and 4 year olds is still not sufficient and we do ask for a voluntary contribution to pay for snack and consumables however not as many parents are paying this. When a child that was a paying 2 year old, changes to a funded 3 year old we lose a lot of income and we do need to look at the fee structure for next year.

Finally I'd like to thank you as parents, for not only coming today, but for the support you provide over the year. This year we were thrilled that staff ran the cream teas at the May fayre which demonstrated the level of their commitment again to our setting and community.

I hope this is a useful overview, please let me know should you have any further questions!

Many Thanks

Stuart Dashwood

(Preschool Chair)