



PRESCHOOL AND CHILDCARE CLUBS NEWSLETTER

Welcome Back!.... Well, what an extraordinary year we are having!

Firstly, I'd like to thank everyone that has supported us throughout this time and I hope you have all managed some sort of break from routine through the summer. Secondly, I like to thank my team that have been working hard alongside me to get ready to reopen.

This week we have spent 3 days meeting a new child and their family every hour of the day. This for most has been the first time they had visited the setting or met any of us so welcome to them and hopefully over the coming months you will get to meet each other in some form.

Term Dates... This term will end on Friday 23rd October at 3.00pm We will return after half term on Monday 2nd November until 18th December.

Changes... We have made some changes to enable us to reopen as safely as possible for your families. Some of you will be more familiar with things although none of you will have seen our new path way! To enable us to operate separately from the school we have a new path that extends around the new reception garden and although it will seem a very long way to walk with your preschooler, it is in fact the same distance as before. We will be operating a one-way system though, so if you are dropping off a sibling at school first you will need to return to the main school gate and then come up our path. Towards our building you will see "Be Smart Stand 2 m apart" signs, on the fence to remind you of keeping socially distanced. The signs are 2 m apart (thanks to Karen!) If you are not dropping off a child at school, we also will have families arriving from the side gate, that we used during Lockdown, situated up the alley way, opposite "Willow Walk". This gate will also be the exit for all families. This is because the path is not wide enough to accommodate 2-way traffic. We have 3 start times so families will be dropping off from 8.45. Please stick to your times. Myself or Linda and key persons will be greeting your child at the gate as this is where you will be leaving your child (on the corner of reception building) We all recognise this may be upsetting for you however we are not supposed to allow parents into our building, currently except in an emergency. The children we had attending during lockdown became very used to this and it was actually a very settled start to the day. If your child becomes distressed, we may ask for you to step away with them and we will have to wait until the other children have

entered the setting. I have spoken to all the new families in person about this procedure but if you have any concerns please email me and we'll have a chat about it.

When the children enter this bubble (either the hive or the preschool room) they will put their things on their pegs, and then wash their hands. All hand washing is supervised by staff. We won't be using antibac gel on the children but they will be frequently washing their hands: - upon entry; before snack; before lunch; after being outside etc

Staffing... Sadly we are a depleted team. Obviously, we lost Lauren and Silvana just at Lockdown. We have also said good-bye to Agnes as she has another job working with the NHS. We have also had to make the role of Housekeeper redundant, due to lower numbers of children and no wrap care provision.

So, we have remaining myself Ruth as Setting Manager, Linda as Administrator and acting manager in my absence, Sharon and Ali as Room leaders; Karen and Natalia as Trained Early Years Practitioners; Kat and Lucia as Apprentices. Most of us have been working since June so are practiced in the new way of working. As a setting we have lost around 80% of our income over this year, due to not running the breakfast and after school clubs, (wrap care). We are working alongside school in relation to this and have agreed to continue with just preschool currently, to enable us on both sites to remain open for all children for as long as possible.

Local Lockdowns... The government have come up with a 4 tier system for schools and settings to operate under during local lockdowns <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-schools-can-plan-for-tier-2-local-restrictions/how-schools-can-plan-for-tier-2-local-restrictions> which you may want to read?!

Basically, as an Early Years Setting the expectation would be to stay open to all children until Tier 4 when we would remain open to Key Worker' children and vulnerable children. This is obviously if we have enough staff that are well, and we don't have cases. Therefore, we are opening with 3 bubbles and keeping groups of children and staff separate. We imagine that should we have staff off sick or self-isolating with their families for instance, we may need to merge bubbles but you would be notified of this.

Key Persons... We have grouped children considering whether their family are Key workers, working parents, age etc so currently you may find you will have a different Key person. Most communication with Key persons will need to be completed over the phone or via email as there will not be opportunity to have long handovers at collection or drop off, however if you email me and really need to share things, I will make sure we facilitate discussion. The feedback forms will help staff to understand where your child is at. I think it is really important for us to all remember families and children have had very different experiences during lockdown and are at different stages still, so we ask you to be patient with us, we are adhering to guidance and trying to do the best for all! Key Persons are in a bubble so if your child is attending just Mon-Wed your Key Persons are Sharon and Lucia (working together) If your child is in just on a Thursday and Friday you have Karen and Kat, and any other children will be having Ali and Natalia. Potentially, as I have already said will be temporary, until we are able to merge bubbles so please do not request to change any Key groups as yet!

Illness... So usually this term would bring about coughs, colds, bugs etc to all of us, as new families join settings, so we would be expecting that anyway. **Please don't send your child if they are not well.** Please don't give them Calpol and send them. If in doubt err on the side of caution. Staff becoming ill will make it difficult to remain open. Follow the guidance and we will too. There has been some interesting discussion this week around symptoms in children so we'll watch the space and see if they amend the criteria for testing!

Positives... During Lockdown staff and families really saw some benefits of the smaller groups. There was really good engagement with the children and really strong bonds were made. The more independent drop off really benefitted the children at the start of the day and although communication with parents is more challenging without a chat, we managed it well. As experienced Early Years Practitioners we completely understand how it feels to leave your child in another person's care, especially after so many of you have been with them solely for so long, with little or no opportunity to meet and play with other children, so we know there will be challenges so please speak to us and we will do our best to reassure you. We will also do our best to communicate with you.

Don't forget... Packed lunches: - please make sure the bag is named. Remember No nuts, cut up choke hazards (grapes tomato's etc), Healthy eating- refer to guidance on our website. Provide a named water bottle and don't send juice. Remember to provide Nappies, wipes, and cream for the day and spare clothes including shoes if you can. All items will be sent home each time they attend so we **will not** be having bags with Wellies left on pegs this term. **No toys or comforters** from home please, this is your chance to keep those for home!

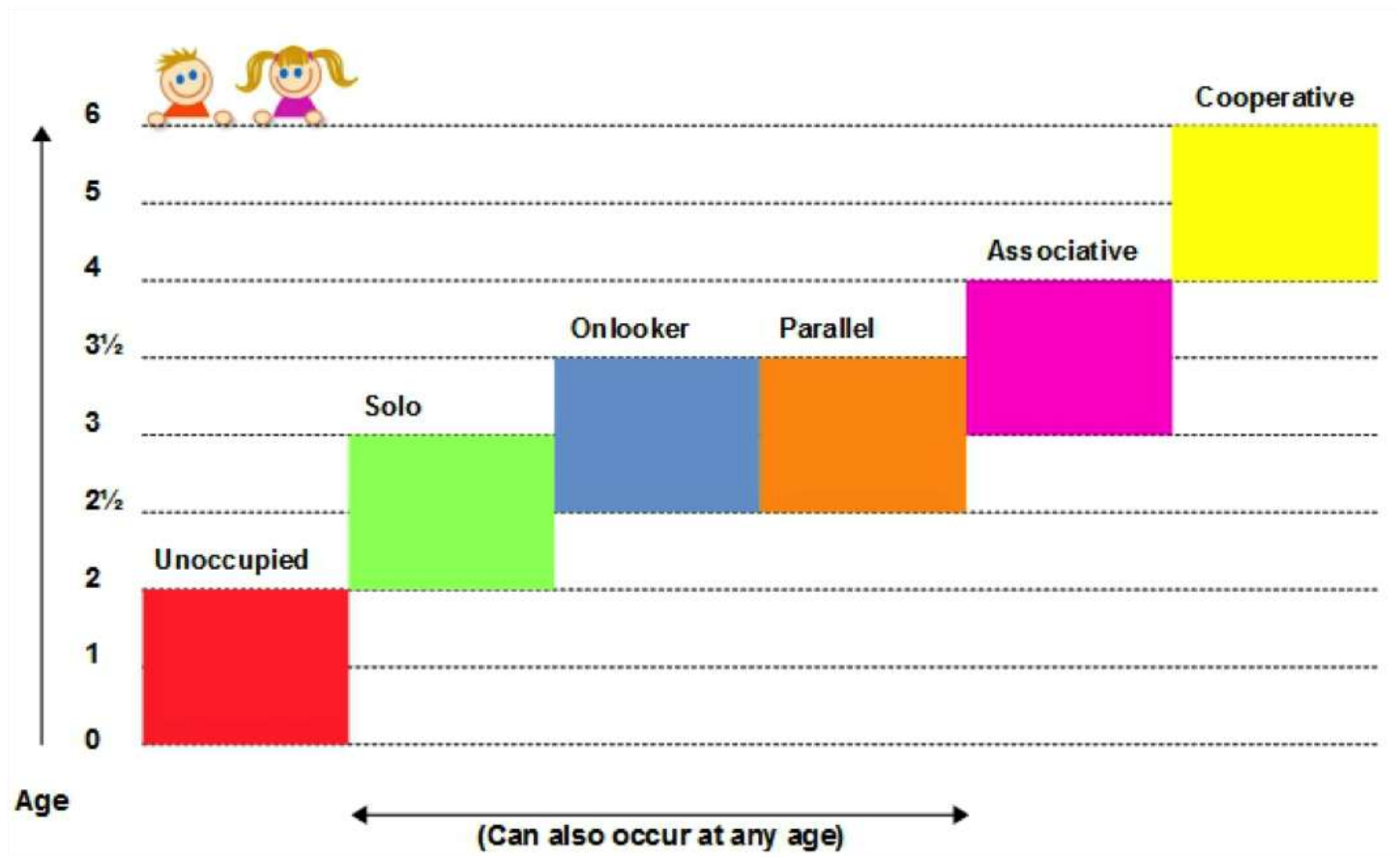
Lastly... It has been a joy to see children in the setting again this week and see and hear all the children in school! Myself and staff are really excited to be with your children and get to know them all again so let's hope we have a great term together and stay safe!

New families... I wanted to share with you some important aspects of Group Play for Children and how play is a natural mode of learning particularly for the youngest children.

Types of play

Theories of play acknowledge that the play experience changes as a child grows and develops. Thus, individuals who participate in group play with children of different ages will have different expectations and may thus be expected to react to the experience in different ways. Sociologist Mildred Parten studied children's play in the 1930s, and the six phases of play she identified (see Figure 1.1) still provide practitioners with a useful means of describing and categorising different forms of play, as well as offering some useful evidence about a child's

developmental progress. In Preschool and indeed in After school club practitioners observe these different stages of play.



Up to two years of age, 'unoccupied play' is largely isolated and sensory. At this time the child, who may often seem somewhat passive, is gathering important benchmark information and experiences which will later be deployed in more active play.

From around the age of two, young children begin to use 'solo play' as a form of entertainment. Even though they're in a group setting, they may appear unaware of other playmates.

Just before 3 'Onlooker play' commonly emerges. Children will observe others playing, and may talk about what is happening in the play, but make no effort to actively participate. 'Parallel play', usually occurs at much the same time as onlooker play, as a side-by-side activity which may involve mimicry and choosing similar toys. Though there is no communal engagement, this is an important precursor to fully interactive play.

From three, play becomes more overtly social as the child joins with others in 'associative play'. At this stage children engage, communicate, and begin the process of learning how to negotiate and get on with each other.

By four, children are usually ready to begin 'cooperative play' which can involve acting together as a team, showing deeper interest in their peers, striving towards a common goal, and joy of being social, with group initiatives defining late-stage early years children.

As with all elements of child development, these play phases can appear earlier or later, and as the above graphic also notes, some types of play may persist and recur at any age. Nevertheless, the important point is that any seemingly homogeneous preschool group engaging in group play together will almost certainly contain children whose play will be at different phases. Parten (1932)

Children's play is much more complicated than this and further models of Sociometric analysis and Social relationships within groups, of which you could read here <https://www.firstdiscoverers.co.uk/group-play-children/> if you are interested.

With the support of trained Practitioners' and adults, observing and tuning in the children's' needs, children within Early Year settings have opportunity to move through these types of play and be ready for co-operative learning. They hone their social skills and are able to become independent.

As usual, if you have any concerns or would like to discuss anything further please feel free to contact me.

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