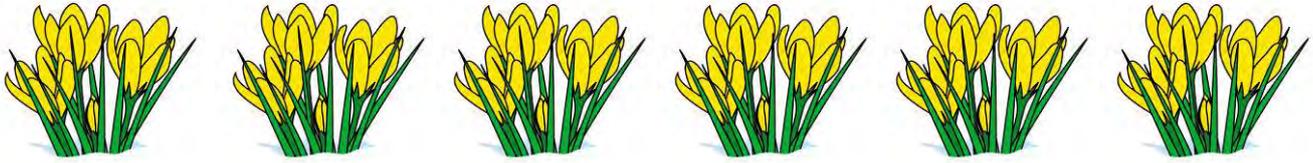




Group Newsletter – Spring/Summer 2017



Here we are in Spring already! We hope that you are all well and find this newsletter useful and full of lots interesting information about what is going on at Mulberry Bush!

CHANGES TO OUR NEWSLETTERS – FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK!



We have been reviewing the ways in which we communicate with parents and looking at our newsletters from units and the group newsletters like this one. We have been really pleased with the amount of parent engagement with our nursery Facebook page and we now have over 1400 'likes' and we believe that the majority of these are our current nursery parents and grandparents.

We regularly update our Facebook page with photos of the children from the different nurseries and units enjoying different activities giving parents an insight into their children's day with us. The great thing about Facebook is the immediacy of the communication with parents, activities can be posted on the day that they happened enabling you to discuss them with your children when appropriate and meaning that information is up to date and relevant.

We intend to start using the 'events' system on our Facebook page allowing you to check the dates of events at nursery, and hopefully it'll provide you with reminders for dressing up days and other activities.

We have found that our written newsletters are often just repeating information that we have already posted onto Facebook so we thought that it was time to make some changes. Going forward we will no longer be producing newsletters from individual nurseries and will instead focus our efforts on updating our Facebook page with children's activities and news from the nurseries. We will continue to produce these Group newsletters, but plan to do so twice a year (Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter) rather than every season.

We would encourage you to 'like' us on Facebook if you haven't already done so. As many of you will know, the way Facebook works is that even though you may have 'liked' our Facebook page, not every one of our posts will make it to your timeline. This is obviously frustrating when we are posting with reminders about dressing up days, different activities or lovely photos of your children.

There's not a great deal we can do about that, but one thing you can do is to prioritise our posts. You do this by pressing on the 'Following' button next to the 'Liked' button and choose 'See first', this will mean that our posts will come at the top of your timeline and hopefully will reach you more often. Please have a think about doing this, we don't want you to miss our posts if possible!

MANAGEMENT NEWS

Some of our nursery managers are due to return from maternity leave as more are due to start their maternity leave! This will result in a number of management changes over the next few weeks and months. Details of these changes will be displayed in each nursery.



We always try our best to provide consistent staffing at all levels but sometimes it is necessary to move team members including managers between nurseries. Where change is unavoidable we aim to make the transition as smooth as possible. We are very lucky that many members of our team (including our managers) have worked for Mulberry Bush for many years and have often worked together at some point in their careers. The result is a team that works together to support and help each other out rather than five different, competing teams.

The consistency of standards and paperwork also makes it easier for our management teams to cover at each others' nurseries. We almost always promote our managers from within and periods of maternity cover give the perfect opportunity for our Senior Heads of Units to make the next step up their career ladder.

Finally, the support provided by our Senior Manager, Stacey Kenyon and our Central Support Team headed by Sharon Rumens, allows our management team to provide the very best childcare we possibly can.

MANAGEMENT MEETING

We held a recent management meeting/training session at our Dumers Lane nursery for all of the managers across the nurseries. We hold these at least three times a year and they are a great opportunity to share best practice, ensure consistency and decide upon new procedures across the nurseries.

A number of our managers and senior team members attended the 'Ofsted Big Conversation' (O.B.C.) conference in Liverpool on a Saturday morning in March. One of our directors, Jo Kinloch, is the co-chair of the northwest region of the O.B.C. which aims to provide a voice to childcare providers and the issues faced by many in the childcare sector.



TEAM MEETINGS

We have recently held our regular evening general team meetings for each of our nurseries. Topics discussed included recent training attended by team members so that they can cascade knowledge to everyone else, sharing of information about children with additional needs or specific dietary requirements within the nurseries, upcoming plans for maintenance work for the nurseries etc. as well as lots of discussion about inspiring activities and sharing best practice.

We are really proud of our committed team and appreciate all the effort they put into attending meetings after their busy days with the children. There are real benefits for our children and families in



our team attending these meetings so that we can ensure the very highest standards of childcare and best practice.

TEAM TRAINING

As you probably know, we work really hard to provide fantastic training opportunities for our team, as we feel that continuing professional development is really important, both from the perspective of motivating and valuing our team, and also ensuring that the individuals caring for your children are well qualified and knowledgeable.

FIRST AID TRAINING

One of the most important types of training we provide for our team is first aid training. We have always been keen to ensure that first aid skills remain up to date, happily we don't get much opportunity to practice this type of skill and therefore regular update training is essential.

We have always trained all of our team in first aid and were really pleased that this commitment to child safety was recognised by the Millie's Mark Award which all five nurseries received just before Christmas last year.

We constantly run first aid courses, with some of our team attending the full 12 hour training to obtain or renew their first aid qualification. The rest of our team attend yearly update sessions to ensure that their first aid practical skills remain fresh and up to date just in case they are ever needed. We know how important it is that our team are able to respond calmly and appropriately in a crisis and whilst we hope that these situations don't arise, we aim to be prepared in case they do.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

We continue to hold regular safeguarding training evenings. All of our team receive safeguarding training every three years and new team members attend a session as soon as possible after starting work with us. The evening isn't always a very easy experience, as it covers some difficult ground, learning from the serious case reviews of children such as Baby P and Victoria Climbié, but it's very valuable for all of our team to know how to best protect children and be aware of what to look out for.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT TRAINING

We will again be running behaviour management training for all of our team over the next few months. The training is being delivered by Vicki Chew who is an experienced parenting and behaviour specialist. The training is based on '*The Incredible Years*' book written by Carolyn Webster-Stratton. The training focuses on how we deal with children's unwanted behaviour but also help us evaluate our own practice and our use of positive praise and encouragement.

NEW RECRUITS WELCOME AND TRAINING EVENING

New recruits who join our team are all invited to a welcome and training induction evening, where they can get to know other new team members from across all five nurseries. When joining a new organisation it's good to have a peer group to share your experiences with and these evening training sessions provide that opportunity.

During the evenings we focus on the most important aspects of nursery life, keeping our children safe and happy! We discuss safeguarding procedures, dietary requirements, assessment and progress, as well as activities and supervision.



We also provide opportunities for new team members to spend some time asking questions about policies and procedures and the way we work at Mulberry Bush. We feel the evenings have been really worthwhile and now form an important part of our strict induction procedure for new team members. We feel that they improve the performance and offer support to our newest members of the team. The photo shows our last session which took place on 11th April.



NURSERY COOKS MEETING/TRAINING

Our senior manager, Stacey Kenyon and our five wonderful nursery chefs met in March to discuss ideas for our new summer menu – see later in this newsletter!



HEAD & DEPUTY OF UNIT TRAINING

Our own fabulous senior manager/managers Stacey, Stacey and Melissa prepared a great training session at our Dumers Lane nursery for our fabulous heads and deputies of unit in March. We talked about styles of learning and leadership, and the many different roles we carry out in nursery. There



were blindfolds, silly hats, chocolate and trophies! There was lots of enthusiasm and energy after a long day at nursery - well done everyone.



TRAINING FOR OUR PARENTS/CARERS

First Aid - our first aid training sessions for parents have been really well received and the next date is Tuesday 23rd May at 7pm at our Dumers Lane nursery. We know that it's hard to find first aid training aimed at parents and we are pleased that our fantastic first aid trainer, Paul Green, is able to provide this training for us. The cost is £20 per person (at the moment this course is fully booked). We are operating a waiting list though and we will arrange another session in a few months' time. If you miss out on this one – please just pop into your nursery office and let us know that you are interested.

Behaviour Management – This course will be delivered by our external behaviour management and training specialist. It will be held at our Dumers Lane nursery on Thursday 18th May between 6-9pm. The session will cost £20 per person and is aimed to provide positive behaviour strategies to help deal with tears and tantrums. We have a number of places left on this course so please pop into your nursery office to book your spot.

30 HOURS IS COMING!

You will have heard about the new 30 hours free childcare scheme from September 2017. We've been working hard to ensure that our plans to offer the 30 hours will be really attractive to parents. The good news is that introduction of the scheme will have a big impact on reducing nursery fees.

Parents of our Pre-school and older Toddler children will have already received or be about to receive information packs setting out the details of how we plan to offer the 30 hours. Also enclosed with the information packs were our new Pre-school information sheets, giving you some information about our brilliant Pre-school units and the wonderful activities and programmes that they carry out. We truly believe that our Pre-schools are the best place for our three and four year olds to spend their critical year before starting reception. The information sheet will give you a bit more information as to why.

If you would like information about the impact of the funding on your nursery fees please pop into the nursery office for a chat. Demand for places in our Pre-schools for September is already high, so please don't delay!



NEW SUMMER MENU

We're thrilled to be launching our new Summer menu, introducing a whole host of exciting new dishes for the children to enjoy alongside their old favourites.



New to the breakfast menu are toasted muffins, crumpets and toasted bagels! Our lunch menu includes a keema and potato curry with brown rice, minted lamb with new potatoes and vegetables, Chinese chicken curry and rice and tuna and broccoli pasta bake. The new Summer desserts are summer upside down cake, melon and fruit coulis and strawberries and ice-cream. The main changes to the summer menu are to the afternoon teas. The children will now be experiencing a variety of hot and cold teas that include jacket potato with tuna crunch, macaroni cheese, sweet potato, broccoli and cheddar patties with a garlic and herb dip, savoury scones and tuna pasta salad.

Our meals are homemade by our wonderful cooks and the recipes are inspired by Annabel Karmel and Jamie Oliver. Copies of the new menu are available on our FB page and if you'd like a hard copy please pop into the nursery office. Also, if you would like copies of any of the recipes please pop into the office and ask the nursery manager or deputy.

VISITORS

As you know, we choose not to take our children out of nursery for outings. Our priority is always to keep your children safe and in our own nursery environment we are confident about our ability to do so. Trips out to the local swimming pool, museum or even nearby parks have an inevitable element of risk which we are not comfortable with.

Instead we try to ensure that there is a lot of variety to the routine of the nursery week, and we know that our children look forward to something special happening at nursery. We also know it is important that we provide opportunities for our children to learn about the world and community around them whilst they are at nursery.

We therefore make a massive effort to invite as many special visitors into our nurseries as possible. If any of our parents or carers work in a profession which the children would find interesting to hear about (and that is most of them to be honest!), we would be thrilled if you were able to come into the nursery to speak to the children about your work, please have a chat with one of our management team.

Recently we arranged for Zoo-Lab to visit with a variety of different animals, including a snake and a scorpion! Shooting Stars Football Academy have been to each nursery to show our children some new



football skills. A number of children attend their classes on a Saturday morning and the feedback from team members about these visits have been really very positive. We have also had a dentist, librarian, lots of pets (including a tortoise!) and fire fighters with their fire engine came into see the children.



REFURBISHMENTS

We have already had a busy and productive start to the year with lots of maintenance projects and decorating completed with plenty more planned. We are lucky enough to employ two fulltime, qualified and time served builders as our maintenance team and they are able to tackle the vast majority of our planned refurbishments. Larger or more specialised projects are completed by a number of local companies who we have used previously and have a trusted working relationship with.

CHARITY WEEK W/C 15TH MAY 2017

As you will know, we have always held one main charity event each per year when we've always been so lucky to have so much support from our nursery families. Last year our Patterns charity week raised an amazing £6461.79! The money was split equally between the Good Life Orphanage, Blind Children UK and Kicks Count. We have supported the GLO for many years now and have built an ongoing link with the orphanage. Blind Children UK provided support to a child at our Whitefield



nursery and Kicks Count has helped various members of our team through difficult pregnancies and losses and we were keen to support their work. We have been raising money for charity in this way for the last twenty six years and have raised over £100,000 over that time, split between approximately 50 different children's charities.

We asked our team to vote for their preferred theme and the clear favourite for this year's charity event is to dress in **PYJAMAS** and our theme will be **BEDTIME STORIES** and **FAVOURITE TEDDIES!**

Team members will be dressing up all week but we ask that you make a particular effort for your child to dress in their pyjamas and bring their favourite bedtime story or teddy (clearly labelled!) with them to nursery on their last day of attendance during week commencing 15th May. We will arrange as many special visitors as possible to come in to talk to the children to help make it a really special week for the children.

'Sponsor forms' will be available nearer to the event so friends and family will be able to make a donation and support the event. This year we plan to support the Good Life Orphanage again and we would really like your suggestions if you know of a local charity that needs support.

DRESSING UP!

We all really enjoyed dressing up for World Book Day on Thursday 2nd March, thank you to all of our children, parents and team members for making such a fantastic effort. We saw lots of silly socks on World Down Syndrome Day and we raised an **amazing £392.80 for Comic Relief** whilst having great fun dressed in red and enjoying lots of red themed activities!



World Book Day



Downs Syndrome Silly Sock Day



Comic Relief

THANK YOU

Thanks for taking the time to read the newsletter. Please try to follow us on Facebook to stay up to date with nursery life.