

Stepping Stones Pre-school Playgroup,

Avonway Community Centre

36 Shaftsbury Street.

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NEWSLETTER

September 2019

**A warm welcome!**

We hope you all enjoyed the summer break and are looking forward to the start of term. Back in July, we said a sad goodbye to all our children going up to school but wish them all the best in this new and exciting stage in life. We look forward to hearing how they are getting on.

Some of you are new to Stepping Stones and we send you a particularly warm welcome and hope you and your children enjoy your time with us. Building up a good relationship with parents is very important and we welcome your feedback and suggestions. Please feel free to come and chat with a member of staff at any time or, if you prefer, drop your ideas or suggestions in the box next to where the children find their names on arrival.

**Introduction to staff**-

**Key workers-**

Each of your children are allocated a key worker who will be responsible for helping them to settle in and getting to know their interests. They will also work with you if you have any concerns.

**Supervisor-** Lyn Belenger who also has responsibility for Health and Safety and Safeguarding

**Deputy Supervisor-** Georgina Gilbert-Moss who has responsibility for Special Educational Needs and Safeguarding

**Classroom Practitioners-** Janet Mortimer, Alison Crook, Clare Gamble, Lorraine Smallwood and Sam Lealman all bring their own sets of skills and experience. Clare is also our **Forest Schools** co-ordinator.

**Administrator-** Clare Paterson has responsibility for the pre-school administration which includes the children’s funding.

**Parent Committee-** We are lucky to have a friendly parent committee, Chaired by Lorraine Thompson who play an important part in our running as well as raising funds for resources and equipment. We are always looking to welcome new parents. It is also an opportunity to make new friends and get to know your children’s friend’s parents! If you are interested in helping in any way, please let a member of staff know.

**Named water bottles-** Please can all children bring in a named water bottle in addition to anything you may put in with their lunch. We will leave the bottles on the table and the children will be able to access them when they want to. Thank you.

**Naming children’s belongings-** We kindly ask that you please, please label your child’s coats, hats, gloves, lunchbox etc. It makes our life much easier when we are trying to match children and items. Thank you.

**Registration and Book Bags-** When you come in, please can you help your child to find their photo and place it on the registration board. Book bags go in the box on the table in the classroom. These are useful for sending notes and children’s artwork home so please try and bring to each session.

**Forest Schools-** Forest Schools will run on a Friday again this term. If you are interested in your child attending, please let a member of staff know as soon as possible. If you miss out this time, don’t worry as there will be other opportunities to attend throughout the year. If you are unfamiliar with Forest Schools, it is wonderful opportunity for children to learn in an outdoor environment. Clare is our qualified ‘Forest School leader’ and is also trained in childcare first aid. She will be assisted at Forest Schools by our Deputy Manager, Georgina and or Sam. Activities typically include leaf printing, making bird feeders, bark rubbing, bug hunting and cooking over the fire.

**Attending Forest Schools-** Please can we ask that if you have put your child’s name down to attend Forest Schools that they do so unless they are sick. It affects our ratios both at Forest Schools and in the classroom if you decide on the day that they would prefer to come into preschool. Thank you very much for your co-operation. If the weather is very bad or cold on the day we may make other arrangements but will keep you informed.

**Music lessons-** These continue every Wednesday with Paula, our music teacher. The children are free to join in with these as they wish and are very popular. It is a lovely opportunity to experience different instruments and sounds and join in. They listen to different music and learn to interpret the different sounds, moving accordingly and letting the music tell a story.

**Parent File/ Notice Board-**There is also lots of useful information in the parent folder and on the notice board which is situated on the table in the entrance hall as well as a folder containing all our policies should you wish to refer to it.

**Funding- Thank you for completing the funding forms.**

All children are eligible for 15 hours per week funding, starting the term after the child turns 3. Some 2-year olds are also eligible for the 15 hours funding and some 3- and 4-year olds are eligible for an additional 15 hours funding, taking it up to 30 hours in total. It is important to note that if you think you may be eligible for 30 hours funding and would like to take it up, that you must apply and get your eligibility code before the end of December in order to claim it in the Spring term. We are also registered to take children for tax free childcare.

If you are interested in any of these schemes, please visit the government website: [www.childcarechoice.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoice.gov.uk) for more information or come and have a chat with a member of staff.

**Sessions/ Invoices-** Please note that all our staffing is planned in advance according to how many children we have in. It is usually no problem to change your child’s sessions, but we ask that you please give as much notice as you can as it may affect our staff/ child ratios. **If you normally pay for your child’s sessions, we do still have to invoice you if your child is sick or on holiday unless you have given us more than two weeks’ notice. I’m afraid this also includes those ad hoc days you may decide not to attend pre-school.** Again, this is because we have allowed for the correct number of staff to be in each session. Likewise, if your child is funded and is sick or absent, we may be obliged to inform Hampshire County Council as it may affect the funding received.

**Sickness and absence-**Please can you let us know if your child will be off sick or absent as we do miss them when they don’t come in! In cases of sickness and diarrhoea, please allow 48 hours after the last occurrence before your child returns. This may seem like a long time but is taken from NHS guidance and is to avoid the spread of any sickness.

**Contact details-**Please let us know if there have been any changes to your contact / personal details over the holidays so that we can update our records. (Telephone numbers,address, change in surname etc.)It is important that we can contact you should we have need to. This may include any temporary changes to numbers for example, if you are working somewhere different for the day.

**Polo-shirts-** If you would like a pre-school polo shirt please speak to a member of staff. They are currently priced at £10.50 each. A couple of parents have asked about jumpers so we are looking into this and will keep you posted.

**Basford Lakes trip-** A letter has gone out with more details but this Thursday morning trip on the 3rd October will tie in nicely to our Autumn theme. There is a small cost involved but this goes to the upkeep of the centre. We hope you and your children will join us; it is always a fun morning.

**‘Themes’ -** We try to follow the children’s interests so please keep an eye out for any notices regarding themes. We also like to talk about anything topical with the children such as the changing seasons and any special events. If your child has a special interest at the moment, please let us know! For the next couple of weeks, we will be looking at Autumn and then mini beasts to tie in with our trip to Blashford.

**Dates for your diary:**

This term we will be celebrating Harvest, Diwali, Bonfire night and Christmas. We have a trip to Blashford Lakes and are hoping to arrange a visit from the fire brigade.

**Harvest Thursday 26th September-** Every year we take the children across to the Avonway to sing harvest songs to the elderly who attend the lunch club. This is always enjoyed by them and it is nice for the children to meet with other members of the community. We also take them all a little harvest gift and we would really appreciate it, if you feel you could donate something small. This could be **small** tins (many of the elderly live on their own), fruit, vegetables, rice, pasta or any sweet or savoury treats you think might be appropriate. All children and parents are welcome to attend on this day.

**Tempest Photographer-** will be coming in on **Wednesday 2nd October** from 9.00am to take individual photographs of the children. If your child is not normally in on this day, you are very welcome to bring them in. If you would like a picture taken with siblings, this is ok too. You are not obliged to buy the photographs, but they will be ready in time for Christmas.

**Harvest:** Thursday 26th September

**Photographer:** Wednesday 2nd October

**Blashford Lakes trip:**  Thursday 3rd October

**Half Term:** Monday 28nd October to Friday 1st November