

NEWSLETTER

February 2020

Stepping Stones Pre-school Playgroup,

Avonway Community Centre

36 Shaftsbury Street.

Hampshire. SP6 1JF

Tel: 01425 653517

Dear Parent/ Carer,

A belated Happy New Year to you all. We hope your year has started off well.

We have a few new faces to welcome this term. They are all settling in well and making new friends. Since coming back after the Christmas break, the children have been busy celebrating Chinese New Year and looking at shapes. We will continue with shapes and numbers over the next couple of weeks and enjoy pancake day. We are also continuing with cooking on a Wednesday and Music with Paula.

**Indoor shoes**

We are trialling this to see how it goes and appreciate your support. This is the current procedure:

Children have a named pair of suitable indoor shoes which stay at pre-school. Ideally, these should be closed shoes such as indoor gym shoes or trainers, something that will give the children some protection and support and that they won’t slip in.

When the children come in for their session, please help them to change from their outdoor shoes to indoor shoes. Each child has a blue pe bag which has their photo on. The outdoor shoes get swapped with the indoor ones and the bag is hung on a peg.

**Annual General Meeting:**

Our AGM is planned for Wednesday 26th February. All parents are very welcome and a letter with reply slip has gone out. Your support is greatly appreciated and it is a great way to find out what goes on at Pre-school and perhaps to meet other parents. We are in the process of changing the way Pre-school runs but more about that at the AGM.

**Help with paying for childcare:**

Most parents know about the 15 hours free childcare that you receive the term after they have turned 3, but do you know about the following?

**Funding for 2-year olds:**

Your 2-year-old may be entitled to 15 hours free childcare from the age of 2 if you claim welfare benefits (economic criteria) or your child is looked after by the local authority or has additional needs (no economic criteria).

**30 Hour Funding:**

If both parents are working, you may be eligible for 30-hour funding. To Check eligibility and apply for funding please visit [www.hants.gov.uk](about:blank) or [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](about:blank).

You must apply for the 30-hour code now in order to receive it for the summer term. As soon as you have a code, let us know and we will be able to set it up.

**Renewing your 30 Hour Funding:**

If you already have a 30-hour code and are claiming these hours, please keep an eye on your account as you are required to check and re-new after every 3 months. You should receive notification from the government but we will also remind you.

**Pupil Premium:**

If your child is 3 or 4 and receiving universal free early years education (15- or 30-hours free childcare), then Stepping Stones (as their childcare provider) could claim an additional £302.00 per child per year. The eligibility criteria are similar to that of the families of 2 year olds who get early years education funding- though it does not include children who have additional needs as defined by the SEND Code of Practice.

The premium can be spent on supporting the development, learning and care of children. At the moment, we are using it to help fund the cookery lessons which have been benefitting not only those children receiving pupil premium but all the children in on a Wednesday. We hope that over time, all the children will be able to enjoy this opportunity. Clare will check with you when you complete the funding forms.

**Free childcare:**

Tax free childcare is also available to anyone who pays for childcare. The government will pay 20p for every 80p in childcare you pay for. You need to register for an account. This can be done by visiting [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](about:blank).

**Music Lessons:**

Some of you may not be aware that on a Wednesday, Paula, our music teacher comes in and spends time with the children. This is always popular and in fact some of the children wait for Paula to arrive. The children use their voices, bodies and a range of percussion instruments to accompany familiar songs as well as creating their own music. This is all beneficial in helping the children develop their language, co-ordination and sharing skills and their self-confidence grows.

**Forest Schools:**

Forest schools continues this term with extra places. The children have been enjoying some cold but sunny mornings, climbing trees, cooking and generally enjoying being outside. If you are interested in a place next half term, please speak to Lyn.

**Food bank vouchers:**

Stepping Stones pre-school is pleased to hold vouchers for the Fordingbridge food bank. If you are in need of some, please don’t hesitate to come and speak to Lyn who will be very happy to help.

The food bank is situated in the United Reform Church, 41 Salisbury Street. Opening times are Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 12.00.- 2.30pm.

**Reminders:**

**Emergency closure procedure:**

We have been lucky with the weather so far, although we seem to have had a fair few wet days. Often the bad weather comes in February so here is a reminder of our emergency closure procedure.

Stepping Stones endeavours to open whatever the weather but in case of extreme weather conditions such as heavy snow, we may be forced to close for staffing or safety reasons. Where possible, we will try to call you to let you know of a closure but if you are unsure, please check the Hampshire County Council website and follow the instructions for school closures:

[**www.hants.gov.uk**](about:blank)

Please keep an eye on tapestry and Facebook too for updates and spread the word!

**Book Bags:**

Please remember book bags so we can put notes to parents, children’s artwork etc. in

**Warm Clothes:**

Please remember hats and gloves! The children’s hands get very cold playing outside**.**

**Dates for your diary**

**Half term-**17th to 21st February

**Inset day (no pre-school)-** 24th February

**Easter Holidays-** 6th to 17th April

**Half term-** 25th to 29th May

**Inset day (no pre-school)-** 1st June