

Playgroup News



Welcome back to all the children and families after Christmas, we hope you had a lovely break.

A very warm welcome to the 13 new children that started with us this term. We would also like to welcome Ana Marsh a very experienced practitioner who we are very lucky to have on board! Most of the children are settling well into the busy life at St Johns. Within a few weeks, we won't recognize 'old' from 'new' children as we all find our place in amongst all the activities.

Ofsted

As some of you may be aware we were inspected by Ofsted last Thursday. Ofsted is our regulating body that ensures that standards in early years setting are maintained to a high standard. The inspection went very well and we were awarded a grade of "Good" which means our provision is strong in all areas. Thank you to the parents who agreed to talk to the Ofsted lady. The report will be available in the setting within the next 2 weeks for anyone interested in reading it. Alternatively you may download it from the Ofsted website

Fees and Funding

As you are aware, the fees are £10.20 from this term, in line with Herts County Council session rate. We would appreciate prompt payment **in advance** either weekly/half term or for the full term. Please note your child's place is at risk if you fall more than two weeks behind in your payment. If your child is over 3 years of age at the start of the term, they are eligible for the government grant, please see Mrs Murphy. We have issued this term's funding forms, please complete them and get them back to us this week. If you think you may be eligible for funding as you are on benefits but your child is under 3, please speak to Mrs Murphy in confidence.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

This month our theme has been "Winter". We have been learning about cold weather, warm clothes, making snowmen, exploring ice and water and learning about looking after birds in winter by making bird feeders. These activities all link in to the "knowledge and Understanding" (Science!) aspect of our Early Years Curriculum. During the month of February we are focusing on the idea of growing and the life cycle. We will be planting bulbs and seeds, watching how these grow and learning about babies and they grow in to children. We would like to make a display of the children as babies. Please could you bring in a photograph of your child as a baby by Weds 4th February 2009. We can return it immediately if you wish as we have colour photocopying facilities. In March we will look at spring and new life continuing our life cycle theme with some eggs hatching into chicks! Our curriculum plans are placed on the parent notice board and we aim to inform you of the activities we are doing at playgroup so that you may extend your child's learning at home if you wish. If you have any queries regarding your child's learning experiences during their time at playgroup please feel free to make an appointment with your child's key person.



Lunch Club

Our lunch club is open every day at the new rate of £3.40 per session. It still remains excellent value for money. It would be lovely to see some new faces. That extra hour is a great opportunity for children to develop their social skills, eating and chatting over lunch, the quieter children often benefiting from this smaller grouping. A reminder that lunch club fees are due in advance of bookings. See our lunch club booklet in the foyer for further information or speak to Mrs Murphy .



Clothing

Please ensure your child brings a warm coat, gloves and/or hat to playgroup. We offer outdoor play daily to the children as there are many learning opportunities outside. Research shows that outside play stimulates children's exploration and thinking skills, raises their self esteem, promotes physical development and can help reduce obesity in young children. However children's enjoyment and learning can be hindered if they are cold, especially their fingers. Please remember to write names on **all** items of clothing, it makes it so much easier for us when the children have been outside and have 'hung' their coats on the floor. Can you also make sure you bring a change of clothes for your child. Thank you.



Snack Time

Next term, we plan to make some changes to the daily routine introducing a "rolling snack". This allows the children to choose when to stop their play and have a rest/snack. Some children get hungrier earlier than others (no breakfast!!) and some prefer to spend a long time at the snack table whilst others prefer to eat quickly and move on. We hope that this system will meet every child's needs. A registration system will ensure that every child is offered a drink/snack. Your opinions on this change are valued. Please feel free to speak to any staff member.

Capital Grant

We are really pleased to announce that the TOPS Grant and Capital grant that we applied for in October were successful. What this means for the playgroup is we have £25,000 to transform our outside play area. Work starts during Easter as the play area will be resurfaced and this needs to be done when the children are on holiday. We also plan to erect a canopy to protect the children from the harmful effects of the sun in summer and the pouring rain! We will be buying lots of new equipment to enhance the children's learning and play. The capital grant of £2,500 enables us to buy more indoor equipment, again to enhance the learning environment for the children.



Late Collections

Ofsted have asked us to remind you that at present we are only registered to have children on the premises between 9 and 1pm. We are not allowed to have children in the setting after 1 pm. For this reason please may I remind parents that lunch club children should be picked up promptly at 1pm. Thank you. Could I also request that children are dropped off as near to 9 am as possible. We do appreciate that some parents have siblings in other schools and parking considerations, however it would benefit the children if one member of staff was not tied up with answering the door and adjusting the register for so long in the morning, especially with many new children to settle. Thank you.

Tissues

The 'sneezy season' is still upon us so we would be grateful if every child could bring in a box of tissues to see us through till the warmer



Fruit Sharing

Thank you to those who already contribute. Please could all children bring in a piece of fruit to share during snack time on Weds and Thursdays. This has been a long tradition at St John's as it helps to keep our playgroup costs down. Please help us to keep this tradition. We do not want to implement a "snack fee" like several other playgroups in Potters Bar.



Dates for your Diary

SPRING TERM

Monday 12th January - Friday 3rd April

Monday 16th - Friday 20th February *Half term, playgroup closed*

SUMMER TERM

Monday 20th April - Friday 17th July 2009

Monday 5th May *Bank Holiday, playgroup closed*

Friday 15th May *Photographer: Black & White Photos, more details to follow*

Monday 25th - Friday 29th May *Half term, playgroup closed*

Sunday 14th June *Potters Bar carnival, all invited—can we take first place again?*

Additional dates to be arranged:

Road Safety Talk for ALL parents and carers.

Teddy Bears Picnic, Banardos Toddle & summer party

Friday 17th July 2009 *LAST DAY of TERM*