



## Winter Newsletter – February 2016

A belated welcome back at the start of 2016 – on behalf of the whole team I want to wish all our families a happy new year and I hope it is a special one.

### Children's recent experiences

It was a busy run up to Christmas with the joint Christmas party on a Saturday at the start of December with a very large turnout. During December, some of the children went on a pantomime trip to MacRobert Theatre and all of the children were engaged in making their own Christmas natural and salt-dough decorations for the tree and to take home, along with some sweet treats.

Since new year, the under 3s have been taking an especial interest in water, such as changes in the burn behind the nursery (which briefly flooded much to the children's wonderment) and also transportation of water in the garden. There has also been some interest in linking this with seasonal changes (such as the very windy conditions which are hard to ignore), colours changes and other alterations of light and weather.



Many of the Bumblebees room children have been very engaged in writing and have created their own wooden peg labels. There is also now a clothes peg gallery for display of children's daily creative work (just below the blackboard, which you should also glance at each day for a summary of some of the children's interests and learning). Recently there has also been some bird table, bird bath and fat balls creation. Some children made their own fishing rods. There has been a lot happening!

### Other news

On 2<sup>nd</sup> September we were delighted to be awarded "Team of the Year" by Nursery Management Today Scotland Magazine. We were also a finalist in the subsequent UK wide version of the NMT award. We were assessed and interviewed based upon the level of team work involved in creating and maintaining the Dunblane Nature Kindergarten ethos.

In December we were successfully reaccredited for our Investing in Children Award following a visit from liC. This is based upon us being observed (and having evidence of) involving children in making choices and having influence in the day to day running and overall direction of the nursery.

Since the last newsletter there have been a number of changes in staffing. Amy Campbell has joined us as a new Modern Apprentice. Rebecca Smith has left to take up a post within the local authority so we said our goodbyes at the start of 2016. We are delighted to announce that Rachel Shankland has successfully applied for the new team leader position that arose due to Rebecca leaving. She will therefore now share this team leadership with Shannen Gourlay. Linda Boon is now our team leader for the 2 year olds with Mhairi West co-ordinating the whole 0-3s rooms. The sunbeams and rainbows rooms have been collaborating much more closely in the last couple of months in terms of sharing space and experiences between the ages of children. This arose from observation of some of our older sunbeams children

as being ready for more space and challenge earlier than at age two. We welcome any feedback on how our families have experienced this change, via our communication book or you can speak with myself or Mhairi directly. We have welcomed a student Lily MacDowall from Forth Valley College who will be spending a few months with us on a Thursday – please say hi. Finally, great news as Steven White and his wife were able to announce the birth of their second child Struan, at the start of January.



Our evening autumn light and dark event went ahead at the end of October and was extremely busy; we were also lucky with a clearing of the rain. A local storyteller Isla Lord engaged a number of the children in various stories and songs. There is a rumour that next year we may go for a group night-time walk with lanterns.

During January there was an evening for parents to get information about and discuss both the ethos and learning at DNK as well as specific information about schools transitions. There is a hand-out from the evening on our website which highlights some of the benefits of nature-based practice and outdoors learning and relates this to the Curriculum for Excellence. One of the issues highlighted on the evening was that parents were not particularly aware of the floorbooks that we use to document each room's learning interests and progression. These large books are always available for you to see and portray nicely the children's learning experiences and fascinations. Please ask. There will also be dates imminently for open evenings to welcome you informally into discuss and see what your child has been engaged in.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October we welcomed a group of Early Years Consultants from Australia – Inspired EC – to share international practice and their Director, Niki Buchan, gave a fantastic presentation to the whole DNK team plus members of the wider Bertram Nursery Group as well as the Care Inspectorate. We also welcomed Juliet Robertson who is a leading UK early years specialist and her blog post about her visit can be read on our website ([dunblanenaturekindergarten.co.uk](http://dunblanenaturekindergarten.co.uk)) under the *Features and Articles* section.

Rachel Shankland recently attended training on "Setting the Table" which is the latest guidance for early years nutrition. This is in addition to our nursery chef, Claire Lynch, who is also trained in this approach. We always welcome feedback on our menus and snacks which have recently seen the introduction of more snack variety in the form of more vegetables and dips in addition to the wide range of fruit.

### **General information and reminders**

We have been recruiting recently and will continue to do so in the coming months. I am keen for any parents who want to be involved in interviews, bearing in mind of course that this is a challenging time commitment for many parents to make. This could be in different ways – suggesting questions or actually being at interviews. We already consult with children and get their comments on potential trainees. If you wish to be involved, please get in touch.

I would like to briefly remind parents of our in-house speech and language therapist (Natasha Lindley) who is available to discuss with parents and look into any concerns in an informal and play-based way. She will produce a short report after doing this and it is often a source of some comfort for parents who may have a concern. If you are interested in this service, speak to a key-worker, team leader or myself – there is a consent and information form to fill in.

There have been a number of lost shoes recently (all of which have eventually turned up I believe). The team here certainly take seriously the responsibility for supporting the children to look after clothing and possessions; however there are a couple of things that parents can do to help ensure that shoes and clothing don't go astray:

- Please label clothes and shoes with your child's name
- Please try wherever possible to place wellies and bags and coats on/under your child's peg.



We carry a number of pairs of spare wellies however probably not enough for the number of children who do not bring wellies – these are an essential bit of kit for the experiences that we offer so please do provide a labelled pair. This is in addition of course to spare clothing (for those puddle and stream days) and hats/gloves.

On a related subject of children's toys from home, we prefer on balance that children do not bring these in (apart from comforters/familiar objects that some children need). There are a couple of reasons for this – firstly it is a challenge for children to adequately take care of these possessions and toys have been lost or broken on a number of occasions. Secondly, the

team tend to feel that the toys from home can be a distraction and lead to conflict between children and sometimes detract from the experiences that we are trying to provide. I should emphasise that we do not wish to be too dogmatic about this however, and I am sure most parents could point out some positives of children bringing toys in – food for thought though.

Due to the risk of mistakes arising, particularly for out of school club collections, I would like to state that from now on could parents ensure that any requests to book extra sessions are backed up by an email (unless it is on the day and you have directly spoken to someone to confirm) and conversely any requests to cancel bookings (which normally can only be done if just after booking is made) is also backed up by an email to ensure the correct information is communicated.

Many of our families pay fees by direct debit as this is simpler for both DNK and for parents. If you do wish to use direct debit, please request a form to fill in and return it to me.

Finally (for this reminders section at least) can I remind parents of good practice for avoiding the risk of head lice transmission. It is recommended (by NHS Scotland) to check your child's head frequently and "wet combing" their hair is the best method. Staff are not recommended to examine children's hair. It is also not recommended to issue head lice "alerts" (i.e. emails or letters) as it is not uncommon to have at least one case of head lice in the nursery. If staff notice lice or eggs on your child's hair, you will be informed. There is no exclusion period from nursery for a child with head lice although we would request that your child's head be treated appropriately. If you have any concerns about head lice or how to treat them, don't hesitate to ask the team.

## Fundraising

Parent Johanna Simpson was kind enough to donate her time and photography expertise to taking and printing photos of children at nursery to sell to parents for a donation. We raised £175 for Children in Need. Thank you Johanna for enabling this to happen!

## Dates for your diary

Bake sale in nursery entrance, **Thu 4<sup>th</sup> February** from 4pm, to raise money for one of the girls at out of school club who is unwell in hospital and likely to be in for a long stay.

School holidays are **Mon 8<sup>th</sup> to Fri 12<sup>th</sup> February**. Term time only children are not booked in for this week, however we are open throughout and we are running an out of school holiday program which can be viewed on the news section of our website.

**Thu 18<sup>th</sup> February** 6-7pm – I will be running an information evening for parents about receiving funding for your child's "early learning and childcare" entitlement of 15hrs 50mins via the local authority when they reach age three. You will be able to find out about applying for this and how the funding is credited to your account.

**Late Feb/early march** (date to be confirmed on funding application forms letter) deadline for return of funding forms

**Mon 29<sup>th</sup> February** – deadline for return of deferred school entry application forms (to council).

Easter Holidays are **Fri 25<sup>th</sup> March, Mon 28<sup>th</sup> March and Mon 4<sup>th</sup> to Fri 15<sup>th</sup> April** inclusive. As for February, we are open throughout, however this is out of term time for those children who are term-time only. Out of school club will be operating a holiday program throughout.

Wendy McBride, our teacher provided by the local authority will be spending four weeks with the Bumblebees team and children from **25<sup>th</sup> April onwards** and will be of great support in the transition to school program.

**Mon 9<sup>th</sup> May** – decision letters for local authority 3 year old funding are posted out (2<sup>nd</sup> class).

*Kind regards*

*Steve R*