Willow Cottage Nurseries Parents' Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2016

www.willow-cottage.com

New setting opens at Bletchingdon

After many months of renovation The Old School in Bletchingdon, built in 1870 back in the reign of Queen Victoria, has now entered the 21st century and we are delighted to declare it open!

Over the last seven months we have all been working hard to renovate and prepare the building for its new little occupants. Our first child 'Arlo' has settled in spectacularly and he is pictured with Jess, his Key Person. We will be having an official opening at a later stage and there are more details and photos of The Old School available on our website. *See more on page 3*

Our newsletters are written to keep you informed of what is, and has been, happening at Willow Cottage. We hope that this will enable and inspire you as parents, carers and supporters alike, to work in close partnership with us for the benefit of your child's educational development, happiness and future academic achievement. In this, our latest newsletter, we enclose some important dates and news together with information and articles that we hope you will find of interest.

We apologise for the delay in publishing this newsletter. An early Easter this year and the opening our new setting on time have meant we have been burning the candle at both ends, as they say! Willow Cottage Nursery at Bletchingdon has now opened. Our waiting lists had become so long that it had become untenable to find a place for most children, so we are all delighted now to be able to offer a little bit more flexibility, and we hope that this will also benefit our existing parents and children!

Valerie and Neil Grady our Directors, say: 'Our commitment to you remains as always... to provide the highest quality childcare (Second to Mum) and a Preschool Education of Excellence for your child. As such we are committed in two main areas which we view with equal importance:

- To provide safe, clean, and happy Nursery departments for your child, and therein to provide a dynamic, stimulating and enabling learning environment for their learning.
- To underpin this commitment, by providing a highly qualified and experienced team of Early Years Teachers, Early Years Professionals and Nursery Practitioners, we are all committed to giving your child the best start in life.'

In the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), ***Ruth Salway, our Head Teacher****, supports, trains, encourages and inspires our departmental teams to provide every child with appropriate and exciting opportunities to support their development.*

Ruth says:

'As parents, and the "primary educators" of your child, we recognise and value your insight, suggestions and input regarding their interests, activities enjoyed, and milestones that your child is enjoying or achieving. Please share this information with your child's Key Person using EyLog when you receive your child's monthly theme information or six-monthly summative review. This then provides an invaluable and important link for your child between Nursery and home enabling continuity and accuracy in the planned activities. Your partnership with ourselves, together with any practical contributions are highly valued. For example a short visit to share a hobby, collection, musical instrument, or other skill will enrich all the children's experiences. A visit from a vet, farmer, soldier, doctor, nurse, policeman, firefighter, dentist or similar is also very special so please do ask. From willow weaving, to bringing in a tortoise or tadpoles from home or simply coming in to read your child's favourite story, having someone special from home in to share at Nursery can make a little person's day!!

Thank you to families at both Eynsham and Farmoor who were really involved and inspired by the recent themes "Slumber party" and "Book month". The children enjoyed coming to Nursery in their pyjamas and loved snuggling down at the end of the Nursery day to a story from lots of mums and dads. Please see the notice boards for full details of all the activities planned for the current themes.'

What's happening this term?

Ruth says, 'As we move through spring into summer we will be encouraging the children to explore their garden at Nursery and use their discoveries to inspire further learning.

We will be offering activities and experiences to extend children's knowledge and understanding of new beginnings, growth and growing things. All departments have plans to grow (or attempt to!) a variety of flowers, fruit and vegetables over the coming months; such as sunflowers (using some seeds harvested from last years flowers), tomatoes, carrots, beans and strawberries. There is much pleasure for the children in watching their 'crops' grow, caring for them and being able to harvest and eat them with their friends!!

Themes currently planned include "Spring", "Occupations" and "Special people". At Bletchingdon *everything* is new and therefore the team and children are spending time exploring and settling in to their new surroundings. The children are really involved in helping to shape and mould the way the Nursery is set up.

In June, to mark the Queen's 90th birthday, we are planning to have birthday celebrations. We will be in touch nearer the time with more information.'

We would like to encourage your participation in any of the above areas if you have relevant skills or if you have any interesting artefacts, books, etc. that might help to enrich the children's learning. Your partnership with us in the education of your child is valued.

Developmental music

Lauren Bolton,

our music teacher, says:

'In "Music Time" sessions over the last term the children and I have been discovering some different instruments, including the didgeridoo, djembe drum and tin whistle and guitar! In January and March we incorporated songs in different languages, such as "Bore Da" (Welsh for "good morning") and a special song for Chinese New Year ("Gung Hay Fat Choy").

Easter was celebrated using songs like "Hot Cross Buns" and "The Rainbow Song" as we looked forward to Spring! The children really do love songs with actions and dancing.

This term the children and I will be exploring some more instruments such as the violin, clarinet, keyboard and guitar in a multisensory way. Our songs will revolve around monthly seasonal themes such as songs about Spring in May, Summer songs in June, holiday songs in July and August, featuring transport songs as people make the start back to school and return from their holidays. Our music sessions will also include different rhythm games, dancing, and puppets to provide a varied session for children who engage in different ways. We will be looking at how each instrument works, problem solving as well as using numbers in counting (such as the number of strings or number of keys on the keyboard). As each monthly planning theme per room occurs, we will also include songs that fit with the theme, for example with May approaching we will be delving into Spring so will be including those Spring songs about flowers, growing things and the land around us.'

Staff at Bletchingdon

Samantha Hitchman

Sam joined Willow Cottage specifically to manage our new Bletchingdon setting. Sam is a graduate and holds the Early Years Professional Status. She has Forest School training and experience and will lead this concept at The Old School and in the future at our other settings.

Alison Morris

We are delighted to congratulate Alison on her promotion to Supervisor/ Deputy Manager at our new Bletchingdon setting. We thank Alison whole-heartedly for her input as our Early Learning and Development Co-ordinator and Deputy Supervisor at Owls Leat, Eynsham. Alison is a graduate and holds the Early Years Professional Status. She joined Willow Cottage in 2007 and is a tower of strength in our leadership team!

SCORES ON THE DOORS

5 stars all round again!

CONGRATULATIONS again to children's chefs Marion, Ciprian and Sophia for being awarded the highest accolade for their standards of food hygiene and practice in our Nursery kitchens!

The importance of role play

Role play is an activity enjoyed by most children, at one stage or another, during their time at Nursery. It can help children to develop and learn so many concepts and skills, that we thought we would share why we think it is so important.

Julie dresses up with the children at our Nativity

From birth children mimic actions/words made by adults and other children. By doing this they are exploring their feelings and emotions, stretching their imaginations, and act out their understanding of the world around them, patterns and relationships. In the early stage the play is often solitary, with little interaction between children.

Terry builds some role-play furniture which mostly comes as flat-pack!

As the children grow, role play becomes an expression of their imagination, allowing them to expand and adopt their thoughts. One of the benefits of a Nursery environment is that children learn how to be sociable and interactive at a much earlier age. It is so lovely to see children playing co-operatively.

By trying out different roles, such as Mummy; Daddy; Fireman; Doctor; Secretary; Teacher, etc. children discover what it feels like to be someone other than themselves – to experience life from another perspective.

Alison encourages her little angel to fly!

In the Kindergarten particularly, you may see many skills developing, including:

- Dressing skills
- Writing and mark-making
- Conversation and understanding of new vocabulary
- Story-telling — making characters, plots, etc.
- Imaginative use of resources
- Co-operative play and negotiation skills.

This list is not exhaustive as the potential is endless. Research* has shown that during childhood pretend play, children develop their ability to think logically and creatively, and solve problems. When you encourage your child to dream and pretend, they learn to use their imagination to see beyond what already exists, and they gain the courage to explore the unknown. These are all important skills for success in later life.

** An important benefit of early pretend play may be its enhancement of the child's capacity for cognitive flexibility and, ultimately, creativity (Russ, 2004; Singer & Singer, 2005). Russ, for example, in longitudinal studies, found that early imaginative play was associated with increased creative performance years later (Russ, 2004; Russ, & Fiorelli, 2010). Root-Bernstein's research with clearly creative individuals, such as Nobel Prize winners and MacArthur Foundation 'genius' grant awardees, indicated that early childhood games about make-believe worlds were more frequent in such individuals than in control participants in their fields (Root-Bernstein, 2012).*

Skills developed through pretend play . . .

- Social Interaction
- Emotional expression
- Problem solving
- Communication
- Imagination
- Role play
- Fun!

Please keep us informed

Please can we ask you to make note of the telephone numbers of your setting given on the last page, in order that you can keep us informed. This is a really important part of our partnership together. Please note that we do not publicise the telephone numbers of the individual settings in order that they are kept free of all unnecessary calls and this then protects the line for parents. The numbers below give you direct contact to YOUR SUPERVISOR and an ALTERNATIVE TELEPHONE NUMBER should there be a fault on the normal telephone line.

When you call them, therefore, you go directly through to your Supervisor or Manager. The main Nursery telephone line goes through to our administration team who will deal with all other calls.

Please can we ask you to let us know if:

- your child is poorly and not attending or absent for any other reason;
- you are going to be late arriving and your child requires a cooked lunch;
- you have been held up and will be late collecting your child.

Safeguarding and the importance of maintaining the correct details

We strive to ensure that your 'family information' is up to date and relevant. The accuracy of the information we hold whilst your child is *in loco parentis* **is a vital part of our ability to safeguard your child.** For example having a secure and ready access to your child's dietary requirements, allergy information and medical conditions. Also, in the case of an emergency, it means that all emergency telephone numbers and emails can be accessed directly and quickly from the office or the other setting(s).

If there are any changes e.g. new address, new phone, new email, etc., please fill in the 'Changes to Family Information' form, sign the form and then return/email it to the Nursery's Supervisor at your earliest opportunity.

Please ensure you are available <u>at all times</u> on the telephone numbers/emails we have. We would ask you to ensure that if at any time you are not available on these numbers to please let the Nursery Supervisor have an alternative number.

Health and safeguarding and welfare requirements

Keeping your child safe whilst *in loco parentis* is part of our commitment to you. As such we operate a robust system of ongoing risk assessment, health, safety and safeguarding policies and procedures which cover all areas of our childcare delivery, including recruitment, education and development, safeguarding and food delivery. You will find our policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed, within our company handbook and available in the main Nursery entrance or from the Nursery office.

Each year we instruct a leading Health and Safety Consultant (Peninsula Business Services) to carry out an independent Health and Safety audit at each Nursery setting and prepare a bespoke Health and Safety Management System which includes the organisation, specific arrangements and monitoring procedures required for its effective implementation.

Should you wish to change your agreed arrival and departure times please contact a supervisor who will provide you with the correct forms.

Maintaining the correct staff/ child ratios in the Nursery at all times

At Willow Cottage we have a very effective and bespoke rota system to ensure that the children have ample Nursery practitioners and teachers from the time they arrive at Nursery until the time that they are collected. We endeavour to provide generous staffing levels at all times across the whole Nursery. This is based around the arrival and departure times that you specify on your registration form and so parents play an important role in helping us to maintain them. Please keep, as far as possible, to the agreed times so we can avoid situations where our staff might be placed under unnecessary stress or where the environment might become unsafe for the children.

Your child's educational development

At Willow Cottage we strive to deliver a pre-school education of excellence for your child and monitor their progress closely with yourselves as their primary educators. The highest importance is given to our partnership together in this area in order to maximise their learning outcomes.

We build effective teams of highly qualified and experienced practitioners who have a sound knowledge of child development and who lead through 'play' and in making learning fun! In each department of the school, our teams are overseen and trained in 'best practice' by our Early Years Teachers and Early Years Professionals who are all committed to giving your child the best start in life. We also invest highly in an exciting and dynamic learning environment both inside and in our wonderful 'outside classroom' and adventure play areas.

We work within the framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of the National Curriculum and from the time your child joins us we monitor their educational development carefully. Our practitioners plan individually for your child, observing and recording each stage of their learning and development in close partnership with you. These records are collected and compiled into a robust profile of their early 'learning journey' and provide a picture of a child's development under various areas of learning such as physical, communication and language development.

Our practitioners use secure mobile devices to create and maintain your child's individual EYFS learning journey and in maintaining their relevant milestones. We then integrate our observations with the EYFS learning goals and evidence them with comments, photos, audios and videos without the endless paperwork trails of the past. This also allows us to spend more time hands on with the children…so everyone is happy!

The EyLog system allows us to bring together progress reports of the children in their different groups and helps us structure our whole group activities as well to reflect the particular skills, interests and development needs of all the children. We carefully provide a balance of both adult-led and child-led activities. We share these observations with you periodically in the form of photos, videos and audio. You will be able to interact with us by commenting on the observations yourself or making observations of your own from home. The Eylog system uses high levels of security including encryption, passwords and secure servers in order to responsibly look after your child's data. The only people who can access a child's learning journey are the relevant authorised individuals and the child's parents.

At Willow Cottage we work in close partnership with parents/carers at home and in the setting to nurture each child. This team work coordinates their developmental planning, improving outcomes for them and therefore facilitates their social and educational achievement and helps them to attain their full potential. We would ask all parents to enable us to establish effective communication links with any other childcare provider that your child may attend (e.g. pre-school or childminder). This will enable us to offer your child consistency and continuity within the delivery of the EYFS over the three settings. To facilitate and enable this transfer of information, we would ask for your written permission to contact them. Please inform your child's Key Person and ask for the relevant form to sign. Thank you.

Healthy Nursery Food: Nursery Food Matters Campaign

At Willow Cottage we prioritise and endorse the importance of healthy food to children both for their well-being and for their educational development* and we do this right from the start! As holders of the prestigious Leading Aspect Award in Nursery Food Matters, we deliver every day nutritious Nursery food as part of our well-balanced childcare service and integrate food understanding, food-handling skills and early years' cookery, carefully within the Early Years Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum. With childhood obesity and its related diseases now recognised as a national crisis in the UK we strive to do our part to encourage children to eat well and make healthy choices which research shows impacts their later lifestyle and eating habits.

**Research from Bristol University The ALPAC longitudinal Study*

Mr Willow (The Bear Chef — our Healthy Food Hero) helps us do this. Our **'Fun Food Family Packs'** are now published as paperback books in order to encourage healthy eating and early cookery for the children at home and for other Nursery settings who wish to use them.

These books have been specifically created for an adult and child (or children) to share together. They comprise a children's educational story or rhyme book; lots of fun activities to try; an electronic link to follow to encourage information technology; and a simple healthy recipe to make together.

Polite reminder for road and Nursery car park safety

Can we remind all parents/carers to accompany children by hand to and from your cars, and to drive extremely slowly when entering and leaving the car park? We treasure our children and would not like to see any harm caused.

Please help us to maintain the security of the Nursery at all times. We would ask all parents and carers not to open the doors to other people unless you recognise them as our parents and staff. Please ask to be 'let out' when you leave in order that we can secure the doors properly afterwards.

Sainsbury's and Tesco's Vouchers: topping up our resources!

We would like to say a big 'Thank you' to everybody who is supporting us by collecting the Sainsbury's vouchers. Over the last few years we have been able to extend our Nursery equipment substantially using them; they really do make a difference.

Upholding our values

At Willow Cottage we understand the enormous responsibility of looking after your child/children and the importance of providing a safe, clean, stimulating and loving environment for them. We insist that all children are treated as we would like to have been treated ourselves as children. We wish to give your children the very best that we can. Please help us to do this by letting us know of any particular areas where you are pleased, worried or indeed if you have any suggestions for how we can improve our service.

Contact us

At Willow Cottage we are always looking for practical ways of improving our service to our parents. Please do not hesitate to contact the Area Manager, Head Teacher or the administration team with any suggestions, worries or complaints as follows

Area Manager: Julie DeBanks
julie@willow-cottage.com 01993 883583

Head Teacher: Ruth Salway
ruth@willow-cottage.com 01865 865206

Setting Manager: Samantha Hitchman
samantha@willow-cottage.com 01869 251358

Operations Manager: James (Jim) Grady
jim@willow-cottage.com 01865 864604

HR and Child Admissions Officer: Angela Willson
angela@willow-cottage.com 01865 864604

Finance and Administration Officer: Jennie Moss
jennie@willow-cottage.com 01865 864604

Telephone lines:

Head Office
11 Hids Copse Road, Oxford OX2 9JJ
office@willow-cottage.com 01865 864604

Farmoor Setting (Oxley's Farm)
01865 865206/861595
Supervisor: Julie Badnell
julieb@willow-cottage.com

Eynsham Setting (Owl's Leat):
01993 883583/357295
Supervisor: Nadine McLaughlin
nadine@willow-cottage.com

Bletchingdon Setting (The Old School):
01869 251358/351742
Supervisor: Alison Morris
alison@willow-cottage.com

Directors' contact details:

Neil Grady BSc (Hons)
neil@willow-cottage.com
Valerie Grady BSc (Hons), PGCE, EYPS
valerie@willow-cottage.com

Dates for your diary 2016-17

Bank Holidays 2016

Early May Bank Holiday:
2 May 2016

Late May Bank Holiday:
30 May 2016

Late August Bank Holiday:
29 August 2016

Leavers' Parties

To be advised....

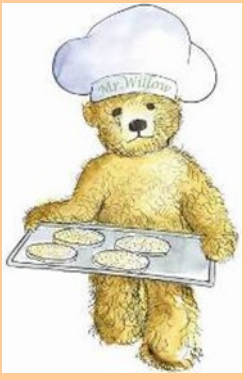
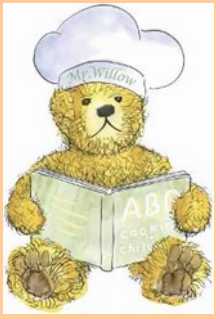
Nativities 2016

Farmoor:
Wednesday 7 December 2016

Eynsham:
Wednesday 14 December 2016

Bletchingdon:
To be advised....

Christmas and New Year

We will close at the end of business on Friday 23 December 2016 and re-open on Tuesday 3 January 2017

Our website is regularly updated so please check for forthcoming dates.