

Stepping Stones Preschool  
School Road,  
Dursley  
Glos GL11 4NZ



Tel: 01453 544588

## Spring Term: Newsletter 1 – January 2024

Dear Parents & Carers,

We hope that you were all able to enjoy quality time with your families over the Christmas break. We have some new families joining us this term and would like to extend a warm welcome to them.

We always have a lot to share with you at the start of a new term, so we have divided our letter into 3 sections:

- **ACTIVITIES** - what we are currently up to! There are lots of festivals, celebrations and events taking place this term
- **GENERAL** – news and info
- **REMINDERS** - as we know you have a lot to remember, so please read this letter carefully.

### ACTIVITIES

#### ACTIVITIES AND PLANS

- **Winter** - We will be looking at our environment and the season of 'winter'; we are putting together a 'winter' sensory display / interest table, which children are welcome to contribute to. We will talk about how to look after ourselves (keeping warm etc) and how animals manage during the winter months – finding food, hibernating etc. See 'Big Bird Watch' below:

#### **Big Bird Watch – Home Link Activity**

We will be making bird feeders with the children which they will be able to take home and put in the garden or hang from the window. We will send home an identification sheet with pictures of more common birds which you can help your children to spot at home or when out and about.

The RSPB are holding the Big Bird Watch this weekend from 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> January, and they have lots of information on birds and wildlife along with suggestions for some lovely, fun activities on their website:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities>

- **Lunar New Year** We will also be marking Lunar New Year which falls on 10<sup>th</sup> February and this year is the year of the Dragon. We will have plenty of opportunity to enjoy this celebration and have fun with *dragons!* Also known as *Chinese New Year*, but as it is celebrated in many other countries, 'Lunar' New Year better reflects this celebration.
- **Spontaneous Activities**  
Although we generally plan activities and experiences relating to the calendar – (seasons, celebrations, traditions and customs), we leave room to incorporate other learning such as 'Healthy Happy Me' (which is part of our curriculum – you can see a copy of this on our noticeboard and website). However, many of our activities are spontaneous and are selected by the children themselves. They may be inspired by something they have seen, perhaps on the way to school or they may choose to continue with an activity they have previously enjoyed. Children learn best when they are motivated, interested and having *fun!*



The children were fascinated by ice during the cold spell we had recently. We had a fabulous frosty walk around the field, listening to the sound of the crispy grass as we walked on it. We looked at the unusual marks the frost left on our mirrors outside and the amazing shapes of frosty cobwebs. We left some bowls of water outside overnight to see what happened (they froze – it was -5c!) and we explored different sized ice blocks in our tuff tray. Great fun was had trying to hammer out the small objects we had frozen inside of large and small ice blocks, and we observed the different rates at which the blocks melted. Plenty of pics on Tapestry and our private Facebook page.

- **Internet Safety Day**

Coming soon on February 6<sup>th</sup>. This is *very important* for families as children need to be safe and protected from potential on-line harms. We are very careful at Stepping Stones to talk about keeping ourselves safe on-line by using passwords etc., and not using devices without asking an adult. We will share some information with you about how to help keep your children safe on-line and some websites which are child-friendly/safe (*not* You Tube or Tik Tok!!) Once children have seen something unsuitable, they can't un-see it.

**PARENTS VIEWS** We have recently given out short questionnaires so we can see if we are meeting your needs and if there are any areas where we could improve. Many thanks for your replies which are overwhelmingly positive 😊 Please note, questionnaires can be returned anonymously and posted in our suggestion box.

**BITS & PIECES** We are looking for **small** packets, boxes, tubs, pots, cartons etc for our role play 'home-corner', for example: pint milk bottles, oxo cube boxes, small teabag boxes - multi-cultural items are most welcome to reflect a range and variety. They don't last long so feel free to keep them coming!! *Please wash milk bottles & containers etc first.*

**RECYCLING** If you have any small plastic jars (such as empty jars of sprinkles) we would be grateful for these as we are supporting children with re-cycling objects, helping them to identify and name different materials.

## GENERAL

**Sessions for 2024/2025** - If you (or any friends or family) would like a place at Stepping Stones (for children 2yrs 6m+) please note we currently have space available for the school year beginning **September 2024**, but spaces **do** fill rapidly and unfortunately, we did not have enough spaces for everyone who wanted to join us this year. Please see a member of staff for a Waiting List form.

We understand some families find our opening hours limited, however we are restricted in what we can offer as we share our building with other groups.

**Tapestry** Thank you very much to parents/carers who regularly add photos and comments to their child's Tapestry account. We do encourage parents and carers to comment or add photos to help build up a picture of their child's early years. Uploading to Tapestry is as simple as uploading photos to Facebook. When your child leaves Stepping Stones, you will be able to download their Learning Journey to keep as a special memento. Invoices are also sent through Tapestry.

**WOW cards** are available for you to fill in whenever you feel your child has done something special or significant. Children are always proud to show their wow cards to the group and the cards are then displayed on our WOW board. If you would like more WOW cards, they are available at the end of the session, or please drop an email and we will put some in your child's bag.

**Fundraising** As you know, we rely on fundraising to raise money for additional equipment and resources. Sadly, the pandemic impacted our ability to raise funds for the past couple of years and we are now trying to get back on track - if you have any fundraising ideas and are willing to help put them into practice, please let us know!! We find this is a good time of year to ask if you (or your children, or other family members) may have received any duplicate or unsuitable gifts or items that you could donate to Stepping Stones for a future Raffle. Thankyou!!! We are always very grateful for your support, however big or small.

Also, if any parents/carers work for companies that offer grants or community fundraising days, please consider if Stepping Stones would be suitable and let us know. We are a small charity, and we need to find creative ways to raise money for important extras, such as our re-vamping our garden area.



**Maintenance & Trades-persons** We had a water pipe burst in the recent cold weather so if anybody can recommend a **plumber** who can help us out at a reasonable rate, we would be very grateful. We rely on our outside tap rather than carry buckets of water through the building!

We are also urgently in need of some help from a **tree surgeon**. Our playground is affected by tree roots, overhanging branches and a dying tree 😞 We want to make this safe for the children as it is a H&S issue. If you know anyone, or can recommend someone please let us know.

## REMINDERS

**Contact & Personal - Details** Please inform us of any **updated** contact details including mobile telephone numbers, emergency contacts etc.

**Label Belongings - Please write children's names on ALL belongings** - especially coats and lunchboxes. Ordinary pen/biro works on most labels for quite a few washes. Please label lunchboxes clearly on the outside, this helps staff to ensure everyone has the right lunch!

Children have access throughout the day to fresh drinking water, and additionally we offer milk or water at snack time.

**Appropriate Clothing** - We *do* go out in all weathers so please make sure your children wear warm clothes – **thicker trousers, a winter coat, hat, mittens/gloves and appropriate footwear**. Windows are open in the setting for ventilation, so layers are needed! During rainy weather it is a good idea to provide wellies and pack spare socks and trousers.

**Illness & Absence** - We would like to remind you that if a child has sickness or diarrhoea there is a 48 hour exclusion period starting *after the last episode of vomiting and/or diarrhoea*. We are also unable to accept children who have a high temperature, or who are reliant on Calpol.

Unfortunately, we have had to work on reduced ratios for a couple of days due to staff absence - we are very sorry to everyone affected for the inconvenience this caused. In this event, we will always try and give as much notice as possible but sometimes we don't know until the morning. This will be accounted for with your next invoice.

If your child is absent for any reason, please either email, or call 01453 544588 (after 8.45am) or text 07759 248163 to let us know. If you have a planned absence (appointment, holiday etc) please let us know in advance. Thank you. Voice mails can be left on the land line but *not* the mobile. If we don't hear from you a member of staff may be in touch to check all is ok.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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| • CLOSED for Half-term                     | Monday 12 <sup>th</sup> Feb – Fri 16 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2024  |
| • CLOSED Dursley Primary Academy Inset day | Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> Feb                                  |
| • <b>Return to Stepping Stones</b>         | <b>Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> Feb</b>                           |
| • CLOSED for Easter holiday                | Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> March - Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> April |
| • CLOSED Stepping Stones Inset day         | Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> April                                 |
| • <b>Return to Stepping Stones</b>         | <b>Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April</b>                          |

Staff are always available if you have any queries or concerns you wish to discuss.

We would like to thank you for your continued support 😊

**Allison, Chanelle, Rosie and Miranda**

## Useful Contacts:

- **Gloucestershire Family Information Service** provides information, advice and support for families with children aged 0-19 (up to 25 for those with a disability) [www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk](http://www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk) Telephone - 0800 542 02 02
- **Suspected Child Abuse:** If you have a concern about a child please contact Gloucestershire's *Children and Families Services Helpdesk* on **01452 426565** (during office hours), but if you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child please contact the Police on **101** at any time. If you prefer, email: [childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

Alternatively, contact **NSPCC:** For support, or to report abuse, or for any concerns: Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)  
Tel: **0808 800 5000**

- **Domestic Violence:**
  - GDASS – Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service –  
Phone: 01452 726 570 or Email: [support@gdass.org.uk](mailto:support@gdass.org.uk) They have a Help desk service Mon-Fri from 9am-5pm
  - 24 hour National Domestic Violence helpline: 0808 2000 247
  - Alternatively: **NHS Help for domestic violence:**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/getting-help-for-domestic-violence/>
  - **Early Years & Development Info**  
For more detailed information on children's development in the *Early Years* see [What to Expect in the EYFS](#) or please speak to a member of staff who will be happy to tell you more or share any of our resources and info with you. There is lots of info and support available on our website [www.steppingstonesdursley.org.uk](http://www.steppingstonesdursley.org.uk)