

Newsletter - November 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

We hope you all had a lovely break; the children have settled back in and have been busy investigating and exploring our environment and having lots of fun. You can keep up with our activities on Tapestry and also on our private Facebook page (for current PARENTS only). Please ask a member of staff for the link. Please respect confidentiality and do not copy or screenshot any photos.

We have lots of info and some helpful resources on our website which can be found here www.steppingstonesdursley.org.uk

As always, we have lots to share with you, so please read carefully and make a note of any dates etc!

Activities

Personal, Social & Emotional Development / Playing and Exploring

At the end of last term, we had a very special visit from the Life Space, which is an interactive workshop / learning space operated by Coram Life, where children were able to be hands with the resources and learn about their emotions and self-regulation. It was really engaging for the children as they learnt some tips and techniques to help manage and understand big emotions. We feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to provide this for the children.

Understanding the World / Active Learning

We are finishing off our Autumn topic exploring the lovely natural and seasonal items that the children collected over half-term. Thank you for taking part in this activity with your children, we had a great response and children collected a lovely variety of objects. We have been using magnifying glasses to look closely at some of the objects in our tuff tray.

Expressive Art & Design / Creating & Thinking Critically

Last week we talked about fireworks and made fire work pictures using different media. We used paint to print, flick, splatter, drip and drizzle, and we added LOTS of glitter! We also marked Remembrance Day by making poppies on Friday. On particularly dull days, we turned off the lights and explored light and dark with torches, tents and blankets.

Coming up...

Understanding the World / Playing and Exploring

This week we are celebrating/marking the Hindu festival **Diwali**, with stories about light chasing out darkness; we have made some *diya* lamps which the children have decorated and can take home to use as a night light (please supervise your children around items with button batteries).

We also drew around our hands and decorated them to represent *mendhi* patterns that people decorate their hands with during Diwali, and we made lovely *rangoli* patterns with brightly coloured rice in the tuff tray. Some of the children also made lanterns and we have some of these on our display board.

For a little bit more info about Diwali visit: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/watch/my-first-festivals-diwali>



THIS Friday coming - 17th November - is **Children in Need Day**. Our Friday children are invited to wear something yellow or spotty in return for a small, voluntary donation – alternatively, they can dress up in anything they want to (practical for preschool!) and just have fun! All optional of course 😊. We have planned lots of spotty fun activities for the day! You can donate on line or we will have a jar for donations.



We start celebrating Christmas early at Stepping Stones, (our favourite *sparkly* time of year!) as there is always so much to make and do! We will be starting to learn some of our Christmas songs and are sending home some Christmas song sheets so you can sing-along at home with your children!



Class Fundraising - the children's lovely artwork has been transformed into some super festive gifts and cards and your orders will be with you shortly. They look amazing!



Fundraising

We are looking forward to fundraising again as we desperately need to finish our garden makeover so the children can enjoy learning and exploring in the outdoor environment. We have reserved a stall at the school Christmas Bazaar on the 8th December where we will be running our **Prize Board** (a Stepping Stones favourite!) which is like a tombola. **We need PRIZES** for the stall and would like to ask all our families if you have any unused 'gift' type items (not bric-a-brac) which would make nice prizes for both adults and children. Small toys/games, smellies, notebooks – the sort of thing you have left over from last Christmas (it's a good time of year to clear out cupboards!) If you could please bring in any donations asap, and ask family and friends too! Also, if you can make or bake festive things like fudge, Christmas cookies etc these would make lovely prizes (we would need these nearer the time of course). We will put a box for donations near our entrance door. We are extremely grateful for your support with this.



Illness & Absence

We are grateful for your understanding regarding recent staff absence. We understand the difficulties for families if we need to close unexpectedly and apologise for the inconvenience. Please be assured we do try our very best to avoid this, however we work to strict ratios (and qualification requirements), and currently we do not have additional staff who can step in ad hoc. We are currently looking for suitable, qualified staff.

Parents have a right to take reasonable time off to deal with a domestic emergency (including when your child is ill, or you need to make alternative arrangements for their care); this applies to both parents.

Currently there are a lot of germs going around and children and staff have been quite poorly; we have not had a full staff team since before half-term! Although children sometimes want to come to Stepping Stones when they are unwell, they may struggle to participate and follow the routines and are often extra emotional and tired. Unfortunately, we do not have anywhere suitable for children to sleep at Stepping Stones so if children fall asleep or are unwell, we call parents/contacts to collect them. We do not accept children who have been given Calpol for a temperature as this can mask symptoms and children suddenly dip after 4 hours.

Please remember there is a 48 hour exclusion for children who have had sickness and/or diarrhoea.

Please email or call after 8.45am to let us know if your child is unwell. If we have not heard from you a member of staff will get in touch to make sure everything is ok – this is part of our safeguarding duty.

Winter information from the Health Protection Team

Please be aware that cases of chickenpox, covid, the respiratory virus RSV, scarlet fever and norovirus are on the rise. Most cases are mild but in some children it can be more serious.

1. Check your child is up to date with their vaccinations
2. Take up any additional vaccinations your child is eligible for
3. Teach your child how to wash their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes
4. Learn about the symptoms of common infections and what you can do if they get worse
5. **Support your child's school or nursery by keeping them off when needed**

Clothing & Belongings - [please put names on EVERYTHING!!!](#)

Now that the weather is getting colder, we would like to remind all parents to dress children in *warm* clothes as we do go outside in all weathers. This includes a hat and WARM coat. Please make sure children can manage their clothes easily as they sometimes need the toilet in a hurry! Joggers are warm, comfortable and practical. Also, our windows are kept open for ventilation to try and minimise the spread of germs. Please put a spare set of clothing in your child's bag and nappies/wipes if required. Wellies are also practical and children can bring spare shoes for indoors if they like.

If you have any old/spare wellies or daps/soft shoes we would really appreciate them. Thank you!

Uniform

Our uniform order finally arrived! We have jumpers and polo shirts in all sizes. They are very practical and warm for this time of year. Our polo shirts are £8 and jumpers £9. We sell them to you at cost price and we also have some pre-loved uniform available.

Recently there have been a number of lunchboxes and drinks bottles which are not named – some of which are identical!! This is a particular concern as we have some children with allergies. PLEASE WRITE NAMES ON LUNCHBOXES, LUNCH BAGS AND DRINKS BOTTLES.

Primary School Admissions 2024

If your child is due to start school September 2024 you should already have received information from Gloucestershire County Council. If not, or you would like more information, please visit their website at:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-admissions/admissions-to-reception-at-primary-school-3-junior-school-lower-to-middle-school-places-for-september-2024/>

We will keep you informed and updated about school transitions throughout the Spring and Summer Term. We will share information, tips and suggestions with you to help you be prepared for the next step.

See below for key dates: From November 2023	Letters sent out to Gloucestershire residents explaining how to apply for a school place
From 3 November 2023 to Midnight 15 January 2024	Application Window. Closing date for school applications is Midnight on 15 January 2024
Midnight Sunday 31 March 2024	Closing date for Summer-born deferment requests
Tuesday 16 April 2024	Allocation Day Please let us know which school you have been allocated.
Tuesday 23 April 2024	Closing date to return reply form accepting the School/Academy place or requesting to be put on waiting list/s
After Tuesday 14 May 2024	Outcome of Waiting List Requests
Midnight Tuesday, 21 May 2024	Closing date for return of reply forms

This Thursday (16th November) 9.00-10.30am - Dursley Primary Academy has an open morning for families with children who will join Reception in September 2024.

Year Six children will show families around and this will be followed by an informal chat and a chance to ask any further questions with school staff. Booking not essential. For more information visit: <https://www.dursleycofeprimaryschool.org.uk/>

Dates for your diary:



2023

- Friday 17th November - Children in Need – dress up
- Friday 8th December (5-7pm) - SS Prize board at school Christmas bazaar – please support us!
- Wednesday 20th December - Christmas Party and last day of term (for ALL children)

2024

- Monday 8th January - Return to Stepping Stones
- Monday 15th January - Closing date for school applications for Sept 2024
- Monday 12th – 16th February - Half term holiday
- Monday 19th February - Closed - Dursley Primary Academy inset day
- Tuesday 20th February - Return to Stepping Stones

If you have any queries or concerns, please see either Allison, Chanelle or your child’s key person.

As always, we would like to thank you for your continued support

Allison, Chanelle, Rosie & Miranda

Safeguarding & Child Protection

If you have concerns for a child’s safety, you can call Children and Families Front Door Service on 01452 426565 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm). If you need to speak to a social worker outside of these hours, then you can call the Emergency Duty Team on 01452 614194. If it is an emergency or a child is in immediate danger call 999.

Domestic Abuse: For help & support call Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service on 01452 726 570 Mon-Fri, 9-5pm, or call 24 Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247