



**December 2012**

## **WELCOME:**

This half term we welcome Seema Patel to the staff team who is working with one of our children who has with unique needs.



We also say a huge thank-you and goodbye to Rosemary Taylor who has done such stalwart work in the school office since early September, as our temporary admin assistant. Clarissa Redhead will join us in the permanent role in early January.

## **SO LONG, FAREWELL:**

At the end of January we will also be saying to goodbye to Claire Fry, who will be leaving COA to take up a new post leading a large children's centre in the London Borough of Ealing. Claire has been the Leader of Care and Well-Being, running the children's centre and childcare services here at COA for nearly 5 years. We will miss her, but send her every best wish for the future ☺

## **STARTING SCHOOL IN 2013-14:**

Dear fellow Parents and Carers,

If your child is starting Reception in September it may be that like me you've been feeling a bit anxious about it - ok I admit, very anxious about it. Talking to other parents about schools can sometimes be a huge help as it reminds you that what feels like a worry you're facing alone - such as which is the school that is going to be right for your particular child and their individual needs - is actually an issue that others are dealing with too. Sometimes, just knowing that there are other people in the same boat can be reassuring. Likewise, sometimes other people's comments can make you worry more, that you aren't getting it right or that you've missed something obvious or someone says something negative about a school that you really liked, this can all just make things worse.



I don't think there are any answers to all this, but as you already know, you understand your child better than anyone else and your instincts are key, even down to the way you feel when you walk into a school, the way you as a person are made to feel by the people there - these things count for a lot. This is one of the reasons why I think nothing beats visiting a few schools and talking to the people there, to see what a place is really like, not what other people say it's like. It seems to me that the staff and the school culture they create are the most important elements of any school, so it really is best to experience those things for yourself. You can name six schools on your State Primary

School application and it's worth filling them all in to make the most of the choices you have. Call the schools you are interested in, book a time to go and see them, see what people have to say about their schools and ask questions if you want to know more.

If even getting to a school is difficult because of work or family commitments it may be useful to talk to other parents or someone at the Nursery to see if they can help, for example by looking after your child while you go to see the school etc., we can all help each-other on this.

Visiting a few schools has made me feel much more positive about this whole process, I've met teachers who truly nurture and care for the whole child, schools where difference is celebrated, schools on tiny, unpromising sites that explode with energy and dynamism and by contrast, schools with wonderful buildings and massive playgrounds that you might not even know existed. Perhaps most importantly, in most schools I've talked to pupils who say how much they love their schools. On a school visit you only ever get a snapshot, but if you couple this with reading about the school on its website and take a look at its Ofsted report then you'll have a good idea of what each school is really like and whether it's a good fit for your child.

Elinor, Parent at COA

Don't forget that primary school applications are due in by 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013, so if haven't already started the process, then now is the time to begin!

#### **CURRICULUM UPDATE:**

##### ***Personal, Social and Emotional Development:***

Since half term the children have continued to make great progress in settling in which has been supported by the visual timetable. There are still a few who are finding it hard to separate from their main carer and a few who need on going clear reinforcement of the rules and expectations. They are beginning to use language such as 'Stop it! I don't like it because...' This you can support at home too please. They are gaining ideas about caring, sharing, respect and co-operation with others which has been supported in some cases by the use of giant egg timers with limited resources such as the glide bikes and the new sand construction toys.

##### ***Physical Development:***

The children have enjoyed the low obstacle courses and the glide bikes to improve their balance and co-ordination skills. Parachute play has been successful whilst balls skills need more experience.





Indoors they have had lots of experience with scissors and this is extending to other tools and skills such as the glue gun as they make decorations for our "What a corker!" community Christmas tree.

### ***Communication and Language:***

Talk amongst the children and with the adults has much improved especially at story times. Lots of children are now using gesture and sign to support their communication too. Activities such as parachute are supporting listening skills.

Many children have loved mark making and name writing on post it's as well as the white boards and pens and chalks on the big easel. There is on-going interest in the reading area too with some children demonstrating pre reading skills.

### ***Literacy:***

The focus upon traditional tales has been very popular when backed with props. The children are starting to complete well known/repetitive refrains too. The books are being handled with care and many families are borrowing story sacks too!

### ***Mathematics:***

An interest in construction has led neatly into the creation of shapes using Knex and then moving onto big blocks and Lego. Size language has developed through traditional tales and an understanding of time via daily/weekly. There has been lots of sorting, matching and exploration with the number line too. The Penny Dale stories 'Ten in the Bed' and 'Ten Out of the Bed' are supporting the learning of counting to and back from 10 as well as the song "There were Ten in the Bed."

### ***Understanding the World:***



The family display is really lovely and probably the most inclusive we have ever seen. Thank you families! The children learnt such a lot from the celebration of the Jewish festival of Sukkot-there was lots of retelling and remembering alongside developing that understanding of other cultures. Hero's Day was also very popular with our two visiting Chelsea Pensioners adding real quality. This was followed by a Silver

Sharing celebrating older people and then Armistice Day which was aimed at growing the children's understanding of significant events. November the 5<sup>th</sup> and Diwali celebrations introduced the children to the festivals of light via the excitement and safety awareness of the fire bowl and cooking marsh mallows in the garden alongside making clay divas.

Indoors exploring the cause and effect toys to build an understanding of how things work and exploring the light toys in the dark den proved very popular.

### ***Expressive Arts and Design:***

The children have had the opportunity to print in a variety of ways this term and this has included block and leaf printing to make table cloths for the home corner. Another activity which started by looking at some old masters has led to the children creating their own very powerful representational water colour images in the studio! They have also loved a variety of small world play with the trains, fire station, and knights and castles too.



The African Drumming workshop was a great success and has led onto the chance to listen and move to different types of world music. This was followed up by Bollywood dancing with scarves, the fun of Boogie Beebies and some great music groups allowing children to build their skills using percussion instruments as well as self-control and listening skills.

We have focussed on exploring core resources in the Making Area in order to work on a smaller scale and really start to understand the possibilities with different materials, resources and tools when used wisely. The poppies and firework collages demonstrate how these skills have specifically been taught. The exploding paint pots gave many children the chance to see the links between science and art resulting in a Pollock like result now hung in the studio!

Our oldest children were ambassadors representing the early years at the RBKC Christmas Music Festival at the Town Hall, Kensington on 7<sup>th</sup> December and learnt to sing and sign the medley of 'Ding Dong Merrily on High', 'I Saw Three Ships' and 'Winter Wonderland'. They did amazingly well and both the staff and parents alike were very proud of them!

### ***And yet to come.....***

As we approach this busy festive time of year we will be giving the children lots of related learning. Thus they will be developing their skills with shape and area in wrapping parcels, graphical talents in making cards and writing those important letters whilst singing festive songs and hearing popular festive tales. We are going to have a bauble making workshop and they will bring home their creation to hang up at home.

Then there are the social events of Christmas Lights (13<sup>th</sup> Dec) and the children's Christmas Party (19<sup>th</sup> Dec) so please put the dates in your diaries/phones now!



## WANTED!

Please bring in any old cards and wrapping paper, bows or ribbons for the children to use in the making area, at this festive time of year. We would also be grateful of any shoeboxes that you no longer have need of.



## WANT TO KNOW HOW TO SAVE CHILDREN'S CENTRES? FREE TRAINING SESSION FOR PARENTS:

Half-day training sessions are available for members of the public wanting to learn the skills and confidence to make a change for families locally. This change could involve campaigning to save a local children's centre or nursery or trying to convince your council to offer more affordable childcare.

Daycare Trust has delivered two sessions so far, one in north London and one south of the river. Other sessions in 2013 may be available.

Funding for these sessions covers parents who live in London, but it may be possible to cover the costs of parents outside London who are campaigning against Children's Centre cuts. Groups outside London may also be able to secure funding for a bespoke training session or support. Daycare Trust will confirm if you are eligible. RSVP to [kgroucutt@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:kgroucutt@daycaretrust.org.uk) or call 020 7940 7510.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

*13<sup>th</sup> December, 5-6pm* - Christmas Lights Celebration, children and families welcome

*19<sup>th</sup> December, 1-3pm* - Children's Christmas Party (all children attend 1-3pm only)

*20<sup>th</sup> December* - End of term, school closes at 1pm  
(all part-time children attend 9-11:30am, full-time children attend 9am-1pm)

*7<sup>th</sup> January 2013* - school closed for staff training

*8<sup>th</sup> January* - children return

