

ST JOHN'S NURSERY PLAYGROUPS.

Stakeholders' Meeting Minutes

Friday 29th November 2024 - 4.30pm - Zoom

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

David Rhodes, Rev David Jebb, Jayne Stone, Keely Brand, AnnaTurner

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:

Approved

3. MATTERS ARISING:

None

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (see attached - p3)

JS presented his report, particularly highlighting the following:

- Congratulations to Baker Street staff for their excellent Ofsted report - they were rated good, but JS stated that he felt they were better than that!
- Thanks to Wayside for adapting to well to the move to Wayside and for creating such a supportive and positive setting. Particular thanks to KB and S? for stepping up to the roles of Acting Leader and Acting Deputy Leader following AB resignation.
- JS expressed his gratitude to staff from both settings who have all had to take reduced sessions due to the drop in child numbers in September and outlined some of the external factors and challenges that are impacting our intake numbers and costs. (see attached p3)
- JS noted that staff had received a pay rise of 3% from September. Future pay reviews would take place in April in order to fit with County/Government pay reviews.

5. **TREASURER'S REPORT** (see attached information from slides p4)

RW talked us through his slides and made the following main points for the Playgroups finance for the year-end 31st August

- 2024 was a better year than 2023
- In both 2023 and 2024 we spent considerable sums getting Wayside Centre fit for our purpose as a playgroup e.g. £8800 spent on playground surface
- Autumn term 2024 is proving a challenging one financially as pupil hours are down at both settings, but particularly at Wayside
- The autumn term is usually the worst financially and performance picks up as year progresses.

RW also noted that we are lucky to have the support of the Church and some reserves to help us weather this difficult time.

6. **LEADERS' REPORTS** (p5-8)

Baker Street: CM presented her report (p5-8). In addition to the information in her report, CM noted that although both settings are currently managing with staff at the moment, this will need to be reviewed if child numbers increase or there are any staff changes.

Wayside: As KB wasn't able to attend the meeting, CM read out her report on Wayside (p8). Following the presentation of the report JS reiterated thanks to Mushfika Ameer for all her hard work and support over the years and then JS and SS talked us through some slide photos of the new Wayside setting.

7. **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION:**

None

8. **AOB:**

JS finished the meeting by reiterating the importance of the work that all the staff do in supporting the development of the children in their care and assured the meeting that St John's Methodist Church remains committed to supporting both settings. He then thanked the Playgroup Board Members for their ongoing support.

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

TBA

Signed:..... **Date:**

Chairman's Report Notes – Annual Stakeholders' Meeting

Friday 29th November 2024. 4.30pm

I am reminded of that ancient Chinese curse “ May you live in interesting times”
We have certainly had an interesting year

Baker Street

Congratulations to Baker Street on OFSTED report.

“Children thrive in this extremely supportive setting. Children foster trusting and caring relationships with the nurturing staff who are consistently responsive to their needs and wishes.”

Wayside

Congratulations to Wayside on adapting to the move and creating a nice supportive environment.

Alyson, our longstanding leader decided to retire and Keely has taken over as Acting Leader, with Sophie and acting deputy.

We continue to have a constructive and supportive relationship with Roger Taylor. We look forward to great thing with Keely and Sophie at the helm.

We have had a challenging time with reduced numbers of children but are adapting to this.

Grateful to staff for accepting reduced sessions.

National factors impacting us.

Reducing birth rate.

Financial pressures on schools leading to them taking more younger children from playgroups.

Baker Street - earlier transfers to primary school.

Wayside - After easing us out they have been aggressively advertising their own nursery class

Encouragement from government for schools to provide nursery places.

Increase in employers NI contributions. Being fought by Early Year Alliance.
Will cost us about £7000 pa after next April.

Increase in minimum wage.

Treasurer's Report - RW

Financial Highlights

Provisional results only	Year to 31st August 2024 £ Provisional	Prior year to 31st August 2023, final numbers £
Surplus/ loss for year on normal activities	14,179	(14,609)
One off costs relating to Wayside move and fitting out of the building	(14,159)	(14,590)
Overall surplus/ loss for year	20	(29,199)

Comments:

- Provisional results for year to 31st August 2024 showed an improvement over 2023
- Substantial sums have been spent in both years on moving to and fitting out the Wayside Centre to make it suitable for our needs. In the year to August 2024 for example we spent £8,800 on the playground resurfacing.
- We have utilised cash reserves to finance this work and these have been somewhat depleted.
- The current term to Christmas 2024 has been challenging financially with lower pupil hours at both settings, particularly at Wayside.
- We will incur a loss for this term, the exact size of which is to be determined.

BAKER STREET - MANAGER'S REPORT:

Thank you for joining our 2024 ASM

First of all a huge thank you to the amazing staff teams who look after and educate your children with enthusiasm and professionalism every day. They make sure there is something new to learn every day - maybe a new word or a new concept or just being able to put on their own coat. The time and care they put into making St John's Nursery Playgroups such great places for children to learn while having fun cannot be praised enough

Staff

In January this year, Alison Skinner joined the team for a few months but unfortunately she decided the job wasn't for her as she hadn't been aware of just how much playgroups had changed since she last worked with this age group. Following another round of interviews, we were very pleased to welcome Jolanta Georgiou to the team. She has lots of experience and has completed an EY foundation degree. With more children joining us in the summer term, we were also able to offer a position to Amanda Moore, who was nearing the end of her Level 3 Early years Teacher qualification. We are pleased to say that she has now completed the qualification. Well done Amanda. As a playgroup we consider it important that all the team have studied for an EY qualification at Level 3 minimum.

Unfortunately, Anne Phillips has had to reduce her hours for the time being and Ahdieh Khosravizad reduced hers to 2 full days for the autumn term and she will only be working one full day a week in the spring term.

Thank you to all the ladies for the way they work with the children, with each other and the good relationship they all have with their keyworker families.

At Wayside, Alyson Brown, who had been leader since 2011, decided it was time for her to start a new chapter in her EY career. She left just before October half term, moving to a day care nursery closer to her home, giving her full time, all year hours. We wish her all the best as she takes up this new position.

We were pleased that Keely Brand was willing to take up the acting Leader position straight away, with Sophie Smith stepping into the Acting Deputy role. It has been a steep learning curve with the realisation that so many additional jobs fall on the head of a leader. Well done to both ladies for taking up their new positions. The team already seem more coherent, with a much more positive outlook

At Wayside two of the staff team are currently studying for their level 3: Barbara Jurasz and Frankie Hurst, with Keely Brand being their tutor..

We have a new student at BS who is studying for her level 2 at Stevenage college. Robyn Page will be with us till June 2025

Both playgroups have been fortunate to have volunteers join the teams, David Rhodes who helps out every week at both settings and Shaun Ezlati who volunteers at St John's twice a week. Thank you to both for stepping up and leading a much more settled team.

Ofsted

We are very proud that we had such an excellent Ofsted Inspection in July this year.

Quote from report:

(Children thrive in this extremely supportive setting. Children foster trusting and caring relationships with the nurturing staff who are consistently responsive to their needs and wishes. Tailored settling-in sessions ensure children, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, swiftly feel relaxed and safe, as they build attachments to their key person before they start. This child-centred approach means all children make significant progress in their academic and personal development.

Children demonstrate high levels of respect for others and play cooperatively with their peers. Children have fun, giggling with anticipation as they race two cars down the slide. Staff are excellent role models and remind children to say 'please' and 'thank you'. When children say 'thank you' to a visitor for picking up a toy they had accidentally dropped on the floor, staff provide meaningful praise which builds their self-esteem and inspires them to repeat these good manners.

We got an overall Good grade, although we all feel that the description is more 'Outstanding'.

Having relocated and with a new leader at Wayside, we are waiting for the call from Ofsted for that setting.

Events

As in previous years we have had a number events when we invite all the playgroup families to join us in church. We celebrated Christmas by performing the Nativity. In spring this was followed by the story of Easter, then Harvest festival where we this year collected food for the Potter Bar food bank. They were very grateful for the donation. In the summer term we held our annual sports day and picnic at Furzefield. Thank you to all families for your generous gift to the playgroup and staff. We are looking forward to this year's Nativity on Friday 13 December. We hope to see you all in church.

Statistics and finance

Child numbers have been a bit lower this year than in previous years at both settings. Especially Wayside struggled to attract new children this term. This may be due to the relocation from Oakmere School. This meant we had to cut staff hours significantly. This has been a concern with some afternoons only having 5-6 children. Number of child sessions will increase in January and with Alyson having left, staff are now back to their full hours

At St John's we were pleased to welcome 7 new children in September with another 8 joining us in January. We also had to reduce staff hours by a total of 42h this autumn. Thankfully our numbers are increasing so we are in a better financial position for the rest of the year.

Learning

Throughout the year we introduce exciting activities and new ideas and concepts for the children to learn.

We especially concentrate on Communication and & Language as this is an area which is causing concern nationally as children start their school journey. We use many different ways to teach C&L; through books, games, stories and toys; We use a number of 'tools' to help support and assess your child's communication. WellComm (which helps us to find out what your child already knows so we can build on it) , Makaton (signing alongside words), Elklan (supporting children who have speech language and communication needs), Word Aware (a method of teaching new words) ; we use the resource Terrific Talkers to make sure we pitch our language for each child at the right level. We are a Communication Friendly accredited setting (another resource to help support language learning).

PSE: To help the children with managing their emotions we have sought external advice and use the book 'Calm' to suggest ways to regulate overwhelming feelings. We have talked about how we feel and have pictures and posters of children displaying different emotions, helping children to name their feelings. We have some lovely books/stories which we share with the children plus always encouraging kindness, sharing and polite language.

Physical: Children need to build up their physical skills through climbing, running, dancing, crawling and balancing. We encourage all children to increase their physical strength by providing lots of different climbing and balancing resources. They also need to build up strength in order to be able to write and draw. This we do by having lots of activities such as cutting with scissors, using large tweezers and pegs,

Activities

This year we have explored the EYFS curriculum through a number of topics. In the spring term our focus was on traditional tales (three little pigs, Goldilocks etc) when we had opportunities to learn repeat phrases (I'll Huff and I'll Puff) and mathematical language through Goldilocks with sizes of bears, plates and chairs as well as personal social and emotional as baby bear get upset when his things have been broken. This was extended so we had lots of opportunities to talk about our emotions and mental health through using colour monsters and the book 'Calm'.

In the summer term it was time to look at planting bean and sunflowers and growing, including butterflies, frogs and the sweet baby chicks incubated by us, who then went to live with one of our families. This led onto talking about our own pets and had visits from a number of dogs. Lots of science activities and experiments.

This autumn term we learnt new rhymes, prepared for the harvest festival in church which was a good opportunity to talk to the children about families who may be struggling to buy enough food and how we could help them. We spent time talking about our homes and how they were different, with families bringing in photos. We went for walks to look at different buildings and spent lots of time constructing our own homes with different materials using real and pretend tools.

A big thank you to the Playgroup Board members who support the playgroup in different ways. We are all guided and supported by the Chair, John Sloper who is always available for advice, to bounce ideas off. To Rob Ward for trying to make sure we don't overspend, keeping us financially stable. To Dawn Fenner for getting all the details of the meetings onto paper. To Guy Fenner for managing

salaries and to Steve Matthews who supports us with safeguarding issues and Petra Necasova for being available for advice.

The final thank you goes to you, the parents and carers of the children who attend our playgroups both at St John's and at the Wayside centre. We love meeting new families and getting to know your children while they attend the playgroups. We look forward to another year of learning and fun.

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Leaders report Wayside 2024 - KB:

I want to start by thanking all of the team for their support over the last few weeks. We moved to Wayside Community Centre in September of last year, and we have had a year of establishing new routines, new children, a change of premises, etc. It now feels like we are getting to know and use the new setting to its full potential.

Staffing

Alyson our leader handed in her resignation and was due to leave at the end of the term. However, this was brought forward; her last day was 23rd October. I have taken over the role of leader, and Sophie is now the Deputy. We look forward to our new adventure and all that lies ahead.

Thankfully, the team's enthusiasm is growing daily, with some supporting us outside of working hours. Both Sophie and I appreciate all that you do for the children at St John Nursery Playgroup.

Unfortunately, Mushfika has handed in her resignation too. This has been a long, hard decision as her family commitments have changed. Her last day will be on December 19th. Mushfika has been a member at St John's for over 11 years and will be greatly missed by all staff and children. However, she has agreed to be permanent bank staff for Wayside, which is great as both the children and staff would have missed her dearly.

Children

This term, three additional children have joined St Johns, and all have settled really well. We have a further two new children to start in January, with three current children increasing their hours to 30. Thankfully the government has introduced a new scheme to help working parents that we are able to benefit from.

We are also accommodating 6 children with additional needs who are progressing well. Additional funding has been applied for this term that will be used to develop their learning.

Events

Our planning has included activities focusing on science, we have discussed oral hygiene, fireworks for bonfire night, and wearing pyjamas to raise money for children in need. For Remembrance Day the staff and children walked up to the memorial to look at the poppies laid. We followed the children's voices as they asked to create a giant poppy to be displayed on our interest table.

We are now practising for our nativity play and preparing to participate in Christmas Jumper Day. The nativity will take place on 17th December at 11 o'clock both parents and children are looking forward to seeing/participating.

Lastly, I would like to thank the team for all their hard work over a difficult period.

Keely Brand Wayside Leader