

St John's Nursery Playgroups

ANNUAL STAKEHOLDER'S MEETING

Friday 13th November 2015 at 12.15pm



(St John's Methodist Church - Baker Street)

Present - Members of the Board - Neil Wilson (Chair), Rev. Ali Facey, Valerie Vessey, Celia Mills, Alyson Gnessen, Robert Ward, Guy Fenner

Staff - Jayne Stone, Sarah Dicker, Margaret Rhodes, Sarah Euesden, Leanne Travell, Mushfika Ameer, AnnaMaria Turner, Ann Conyers, Kerry Gentle

Parents - Jo Caras, Kristina Kursalina, Hellen Munthali, Nina Lodge, Omar Syed, Theresa Gaylor, Maigorzahe Jeb

Church Representatives- Roger Croughton, Pat Griffith, Margaret Bland

Welcome - Neil, as Chairman, welcomed everyone and introduced the members of the NPG Board, thanking them for their support. He explained the connection between the Church and the NPG and how St John's has overall responsibility, through the NPG Board and Church Council. He expressed the appreciation of the Board for all the hard work and enthusiasm shown by the staff, at both settings, and the continuing support of the parents,

Apologies for absence -, Keely Barnes, Rebecca Cooke, Virginia Mash, Anne Carter

Minutes - the minutes of the ASM held on 14th November 2014 at St John's Church were agreed and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising - there were no matters arising.

Manager's/Leader's Report - Celia and Alyson presented their comprehensive reports for the Baker Street and Oakmere settings. (Both reports will be attached to these minutes.) Both Celia and Alyson concluded by thanking all their staff for their support and hard work. Celia also expressed her especial thanks to the church Fix It group for all their invaluable help.

Managers Report presented by Celia Mills This report relates to October 2014- November 2015

Following the ASM in October last year, we had some busy weeks preparing for our wonderful Nativity event in the church, which was very well attended and much enjoyed by those who came.

We held our biannual parent consultations in December. Something which we believe parents find very useful, although of course the keyworkers are available to talk to you throughout the year and the journals available to take home and enjoy.

We also kept an eye on our daffodils which we had planted in aid of Marie Curie Cancer care - and these were ready to take home in January 2015 when we asked each family to donate to the charity while carefully caring for the daffodil at home. The children all wrote to Santa and got a reply at home, having walked to the nearest letterbox to post their own letters first. We celebrated Diwali, made lovely fireworks pictures and of course lots of Christmas decorations. Who knew glitter could spread so far!

In the spring term we learnt about 'ourselves'. We looked at pictures when we were little, talked about our senses and what they do. We tasted lots of different foods, smelt herbs, food, plants, drinks. We used our eyes to look at things close and far away as well as trying to remember what we had seen on the tray. We listened to lots of sounds trying to work out what they were. A lovely topic with lots of learning and children do like to talk about themselves so lots of new language.

In May, on election day, we invited all our families to join us at Hatfield farm for a day of outdoor play, looking at animals, tractor and train rides. As the church is used as a polling station we decided it would be a lovely way to spend the day. In June we were busy preparing for the carnival, with a theme of 'our favourite books'. This attracted lots of families who dressed their children (and some adults) in themed clothing. A long walk especially in costume but we had fun on the day.

As usual in the summer term we looked and explored the lifecycles of many different creatures. Tadpoles turning into frogs (lots of them!), caterpillars into butterflies and after a second attempt, eggs into chicks. All this requires careful nurturing by the staff and teaches the children a lot about caring for others. The chicks were eventually rehomed in the summer holiday.

Late in the summer term we again invited families to participate in our Barnarno's sponsored walk, which is also our end of term picnic and sports day. A warm day in July brought most families and much exercise was seen. The children made the most of the huge space and didn't seem to stop running for the hours we were there.

We distributed 25 packs of BookStart resources to our children leaving to go to a Reception class in September. During the summer term we also took part in a research project carried out by The Literacy Trust. This was a very interesting and informative bit of research which each keyworker was able to watch for 'their' children. As we had participated before we were again selected to take part.

We were also asked to be part of a pilot run by Virtual Schools, looking at how children who are or have been in care are tracked through their education. As a setting we are

known to be champions for what we can do to improve the lives of children, so County suggested we should be part of the research.

Autumn 2015 term we have been focussing our learning through people in our community, with some great activities to learn about chefs, harvest time and food; vets with visits from various pets including a tortoise, a very large puppy and a snake; the fire engine came with much excitement for the children and the staff.

Child numbers

Last year (Autumn 2014) we were low on child numbers for the first term of the year, but this certainly built up over the year. In the Summer 2015 term we had 64 children on roll. 35 of these moved on to nursery or reception class at the end of the summer term. For this term (Autumn 2015) we have 54 children with a further 10 joining us in January and at least 8 in April.

Due to the high number of children who wish to join us at St John's we may need to look at extending our hours to make sure as many children as possible can access their 15 hours with us. With the afternoon session being only 2.5 hours, it is difficult to allocate 15 hours. A consultation will take place over the next few months to see if it is possible to increase our hours. It will obviously be dependent on staff availability too as they already work incredibly hard and it may not be practical for parents who pick up from local primary schools.

Staffing

We said goodbye to Margaret Steff who had joined us in 2011; she took a position at Pope Paul school which fitted in better with her family commitments. We briefly employed Clair Gilbert who was unable to continue with us, again due to family commitments but taking on Ellie Allan Kerwin who re-joined us in the summer term, taking on a number of keychildren and quickly settling in. She will unfortunately be leaving us again at the end of the autumn term as she is finding it difficult to get childcare for her young child making it uneconomical to continue working. We hope she will return to us at a later date. We are in the middle of recruiting new staff, not just to replace Ellie but also keep us within ratios with the new children starting. Two new faces will hopefully be seen soon.

Our apprentice Sarah Cornwell completed her second year with us. She continued to bring lots of energy to the setting and had some lovely fun ways to interact with the children. Unfortunately she was unable to join us in September 2015 due to ill health and we miss her greatly. We had some very capable long term students during the year including Clarice Stokes and Caitlin Caffell as well as students coming for a week for work experience.

Staff have worked to improve the playgroup; Mrs Stone made a fantastic mud kitchen out of pallets and an old sink; She has supported the staff team to produce some brilliant

activities over the year, with fun learning (even if it is a bit messy sometimes). The bog garden is now a digging garden and the outside area has been updated with new logs and outdoor toys. Mrs Mash keeps the newsletters bright and professional, she keeps all the statistics of the children (which are a requirement for Ofsted) up to date and is generally an invaluable help with admin which increases every year!

The staff/keyworker team at St John's work extremely hard and professionally to make the experiences for the children stimulating, exciting and a fun place to learn. They all take time to talk to parents and family members, they produce amazing learning journals which are a real treasure for parents to take home. Thank you for the hard work and dedication to show to St John's. It is highly valued by myself and the board and I'm sure parents agree with me too.

Training.

Various training has been undertaken by the staff team this year. Two staff have attended Nurture training and we were able to apply for some funding to support children who find it difficult to cope in the setting, and also to purchase resources (such as books about bereavement). Designated Safeguarding and Government training which has included looking at British values which we should and do work on at St John's.

Conferences on supporting children's language, Special Needs, 2 year old conference, First Aid, County briefings for leaders and managers. All the staff team attended 'Everyone a Teacher' and Wellcomm. Courses on Music, maths, observations and so on. Some are accessed through Educare online, others through Herts for Learning.

Oakmere staff have seen some changes over the last year too; with ever increasing funded 2 years olds joining the playgroup. Alyson and her team have continued to change the setting to be much more '2 year friendly', with a redesign in the garden, the covered area and inside. Well done ladies, I know you spent a long time planning, re-planning and executing your ideas. A work in progress. Congratulations to the Oakmere team, lead expertly by Alyson Gnessen, who this year achieved a 'GOOD' ofsted rating following an inspection in the summer term. I am extremely proud of them for the way they improve learning opportunities for children.

A big thank you to the fix it group. We continue to get help to mend, repair and replace items needed at playgroup. This year the group spent a lot of time over the summer holiday redecorating the upper room and replacing the rather tired looking carpet. Our bookcase needed a major overhaul as did our shed, various toys and equipment is given a new lease of life, so thank you. (Even if the fix it team all groan when I turn up on a Monday ☺)

And finally - a thank you to you - the parents for trusting us with your children. They bring us joy and new learning every day and we take great pleasure in sharing in their achievements. This can be using the potty for the first time, being able to talk and

repeat back words, showing restraint and being able to share, recognising their name, organising worms in the right order or building that great construction.

We hope to hold an event to celebrate 50 years of St John's Nursery Playgroup. We opened in September 1965 and although there have been many changes to regulations, we still believe that children learn best through play. A theory we have stuck to over the years (and now fully understood by those who work with children) despite several attempts by Governments to 'schoolify' and formalise learning for 2-5 year olds. If you have any ideas and/or would like to help us with the planning, please let me know.

St John's Nursery Playgroup Oakmere Leaders report - November 2015

Since our last Stakeholders meeting we have had a busy year.

We welcomed new children in the spring, summer and most recently Autumn Terms who all settled well into the routine. We have a predominance of 2 year olds and several families with English as an additional language, from Slovakia and the Czech republic and Bangladeshi families who we are supporting with home to school books.

We have been very occupied with activities such as a photo session with Richard Kerber who takes lovely b/w photos in time for Easter presents, and some lovely colour pictures for Christmas on 23rd November, we have visited the local children's centre and I have read books to the families, which I will continue to do every month or so, this enhances our links between current and future parents. We have been for walks to the woods, the local shops and the park. We also continue to enjoy our weekly music sessions with the very tuneful Mrs Rhodes. Thank you for always being so accommodating with your music sessions.

In the summer term we introduced tadpoles, caterpillars and chicks into playgroup so we could study lifecycles and we watched all the local schools take part in the mini marathon around the grounds of Oakmere School.

In July, parents came to playgroup for parent consultations to meet with the key workers to discuss their child's progress and look at the amazing learning journals the staff produce. The parents all commented on what a great opportunity and how easy going and relaxed the consultations are. These are continuing in December for this year's cohort. We had around 15 children leave to move onto schools around Potters Bar. We ensured that the transitioning for children was targeted and got uniform from the local schools for the children to dress up in and get used to wearing uniform, and we welcomed teachers from Little Heath School and Pope Paul, and we took the children going to Oakmere over the fence to transition. We gave them a good send off at our end of term party. We once again welcomed Mrs Rhodes and were lucky enough to offer the children pony rides on Perry the pony, a pet belonging to one of our children.

The children had great fun and fed Perry carrots. The new term started well in September, welcoming 10 new children, mainly 2 year olds and throughout the term we

have welcomed another 5 children who are starting one day a week until January when they will get funding and can start more hours.

Staff

Now on to my most valuable asset - the staff. I was sad that at the beginning of term my senior practitioner Sharon handed in her notice. She loved being at St Johns but as her daughter is older and didn't need her at home so much we could not offer Sharon enough working hours. However I have been able and very pleased to welcome our newest member of the team Kerry Gentle as a practitioner (welcome Kerry).

Kerry's son was with us at playgroup last year, and she loved it and the team so much that she wanted to join us.

We have been pleased to host several work experience students who learn a great deal with us. Some are short weeks and some from college are more long term.

The staff have undertaken lots of training. Keely Barnes is in year two of the EYFD, Keely keep going you are doing well and I look forward to attending your graduation ceremony next year! Even though I thought I had left college I returned earlier in the year as I was asked by my tutor to do a training session for her students on Leadership and Management. It must have gone well as the tutor has asked me to go back for this year's students. One of which is Keely... no heckling me Keely.

I have also started an on line diploma in special needs.

Other staff have undertaken courses in Safeguarding; First Aid; Maths for Early years; Boys, boys, boys; Speech and Language, Characteristics of Effective learning and English as An additional Language.

I have had some recent training on using the Wellcomm Resource Pack a communication tool which will support our children with speech and language prior to involving speech and language therapists.

Every year I thank my team, and this year is no exception. I count myself lucky to have such a mad, fun and dedicated team. You have supported me throughout much change and the setting is looking great. This was also confirmed when Ofsted paid us an unannounced visit in March. We attained a Good rating which we are very proud of. Keep up the good work ladies, everything you are doing is great. You are all progressing well, showing a real passion for the vision of the playgroup, and making it a great place for the children and a lovely place to be working

All the staff have undergone appraisals and are a highly motivated team and have made the setting into an 'amazing place to be' as quoted by a health visitor on her recent visit, as well as recent parents who have been thrilled that their children they did not think would settle, have. We are proud of the setting which includes some fantastic introductions to our outside area. We have a great but noisy musical corner, a warm and welcoming sensory hut, a realistic garage and a fantastic very dirty mud kitchen.

It is lovely to watch the children enjoying all of this including making lots of mud pies, some of which have been offered to me to eat!

Inside, our multicultural area has been developed and is coming together to provide a warm welcome to families from all cultures and backgrounds, and our weekly woodland

walks have developed so that we not only enjoy the walk, the outdoors environment but have other activities linked to being outside.

Our successful book scheme has lead us to starting a song sharing scheme. We have given every family a folder of songs which we sing which can be sent home with the children to share with their parents and we add to it on a regular basis.

Nurture

I managed to secure some funding and in order to support our newest children we have started home visits for the first time. The keyworkers and I visited the family's homes and took along some settling in boxes, which we helped the children decorate and filled with pictures of family and their favourite toys. This has helped several of our children settle. If they are sad we open their special boxes and look through it. This encourages other children to join in and diverts the children from feeling sad.

As well as the visits I have created some nurture bags. These have been a wonderful tool to help unsettled children to link home and school together. This has worked well, as recently we filled the bag with a picture of us as a team, and the child and I coloured a picture of Peppa Pig. I discussed this special bag with the mum and every week she has been bringing in pictures of things that the child has done and we are able to talk about them. It has worked really well and the particular children we have used this with have now settled into playgroup life.

We also continue to send John Bear home with the children. Our little bear friend John goes home with the children, who take it out and about with them and write about sharing their experiences. We have a lovely diary of the children's time which we look at with our children.

We are looking forward to our nativity play at the end of term. We have been practising our play based around the Bear Hunt story and will see how our youngest children join in. Thank you to the board for all their support over the year, and for popping in and giving additional support and encouragement to the staff.

Before I sign off, and I know I've mentioned it above, I would like to thank an amazing team of ladies, who have supported me, laughed with me, eaten lots of biscuits with me and helped me to steer this playgroup in the right direction and help keep up our excellent reputation in the community. Without you guys we wouldn't have the reputation we have now. Thank you

Neil said that both reports show just how much work and care go into running both settings. The Board relies on the expertise and dedication of the staff. On top of all the activities etc. there was always a vast amount of paper work, record keeping to be dealt with.

Accounts - copies of the accounts, which Rob had prepared beforehand, were circulated. Rob explained it was not the purpose of the NPG to make a profit as such and we aim to break even each year. Though we had made a small loss this year, in the general account,

we do have funds in the reserve account to cover contingencies. Neil explained it was necessary requirement to keep a healthy reserve fund and the format for this was set by the Board. He thanked Rob for his work in preparing the accounts.

General Discussion - Theresa Gaylor asked how the finances work in relation to providing resources and was a set amount put aside for this. Neil explained that grants were available to fund buying some equipment. Celia and Alyson are constantly looking at what funding is being offered and applying for whatever is available through County and other organisations. The Leaders have an agreed ceiling to spend on resources - other larger requests are dealt with, by the Board, on a case by case basis and prioritised.

Theresa Gaylor raised the question about computers and their use. Celia explained there were iPads in use, which have passwords to prevent unsuitable access. There is music, as well as games and educational content etc. on these. Both playgroups have some sort of ICT resources out every day such as torches, remote control cars, beebots and toys with buttons to press. The NPG appreciates that ICT is part of the world but many homes have access to computers, iPads etc. and one of the aims of the playgroup is to encourage children to socialise and use the outside areas to play and explore

AOB -Celia said that 2015 is the 50 year anniversary of BS opening. It has been discussed previously but nothing has been organised and we are looking for a way forward. She asked if anyone had any suggestions as to how we can mark the occasion and incorporate a display of memorabilia etc. We need to think of ways we are going to celebrate this before too much time passes and it fades away. Having an evening BBQ was a possibility or an afternoon tea on a Saturday. We need to consider who is likely to attend so we can arrange the best time. It was suggested that it could be linked in with a NPG gathering such as Christmas Nativity, Easter or Harvest. The former is too close now and by next October it really is too late. We could consider linking with a NPG Easter service. Neil said it would go on the next Board meeting agenda as a priority item.

Leaders Report presented on behalf of Oakmere by Alyson Gnessen, Leader

Rev. Ali Facey thanked Valerie, Roberts, Guy and especially Neil for all the time and work on a voluntary basis, often behind the scenes, they put for the NPG.

Date of next meeting - this will be arranged for November 2016 on a Friday, the actual date to be notified ASAP.

Meeting closed at 1.15pm