

Dear Parents,

I hope you and your families are keeping safe and well?

I am aware that the weeks ahead will be challenging for parents as schools have been closed in an effort to reduce the number of Covid infections - with that in mind I have put together a few suggestions that you may wish to consider to keep your child busy and stimulated while progressing their development. Pre-School offers a play based learning curriculum and provides learning opportunities in mathematical, language & literacy, personal, social & emotional, physical, creativity and knowledge and understanding of our world around us. I have enclosed a variety of activities for children but parents are not to feel under any pressure to complete these. They are a few ideas which we will add to via our webpage over the next few weeks. There is no timescale for completion but I hope you and your child have fun engaging in those you do.

Early Mathematical Activities- Engage with your child and other siblings playing counting games, colour matching and sorting games and activities, talk about size (big, small, medium size) shapes (all 2D shapes) encourage them to compare and discuss heavy and light etc. Let your child use real measuring tapes and weighing scales. Jigsaw puzzles are great for developing problem solving skills, fine motor and co-ordination and concentration and focus skills. Games such as, Snakes & Ladders and Ludo are great for developing counting and recognizing numbers, and also promote turn taking and learning that you don't always win !!

Literacy & Language - Each day in Pre-School children are encouraged to share their news, ideas and knowledge - Please set time aside to chat to your child and also ask how they are feeling - they may be missing Pre-School and their friends.

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to continue with children's enjoyment of our daily story time - read to them and encourage them to recall the story back to you and ask them relevant open questions. The stories you make up yourself are usually the best - provide visuals and encourage children to make up their own stories. We had some really good fun before Christmas with the children putting on their own Puppet Show.

Our Focus books for January were to be 'Ridiculous' a lovely story about a tortoise & hibernation - and 'One Snowy Night' perhaps you could purchase these books on Amazon or access them via YouTube

Many of our children were beginning to develop an interest in Writing & Drawing activities before the Christmas holidays - Please ensure they have lots of opportunities to build on this interest with a variety of marks, pencil, crayons etc.

I have enclosed a 'Busy Book' similar to what your child has in Pre-School - please encourage your child to write or draw in these - If parents could date and make a note of anything their child says about their work, we would love to see these when they return to Pre-School.

**Using a tripod shaped pencil will help children who are finding it difficult to hold a pencil appropriately.

Creativity: Imaginative Play has been very popular this year in Pre-School - please give your child lots of opportunities to further develop their imaginative play skills - dressing up, singing and rhyme time, encourage them to put on a show for you, make dens inside and outside, give them real things to play with, washing up bowls, water, saucepans, wooden spoons etc. Small world play with small people, cars, farm and wild animals, dolls houses, garages etc are great to encourage imaginative roleplay.

Provide lots of paper, markers and painting, scissors, glue, masking tape and old boxes etc to build on this high level of interest amongst the children this year. I have enclosed some ideas and resources for craft activities

Physical Play - this may be difficult for families at this time of isolation but please use whatever space you have preferably outside to encourage climbing, running, hopping and skipping games. Balls for throwing, bouncing and catching, kicking and basketball types games are all great and always much more fun when the adults join in. Musical games such as statues and dancing are also great fun when parents join in too. Get the bikes and scooters out.

Understanding & Awareness of Our World Around Us:

Our learning topic for January would have been 'Learning About Winter'

-Introducing Winter as a season (talking about the order of the 4 seasons)
Encourage children to talk about what they know about Winter.

-Winter Weather (introducing winter weather words eg Frost, Ice, Snow, Icicles, Icy, Snowflakes etc Talk about various clothes we wear in Winter and how and why this differs from other season.

-Exploring Ice - talk about the cycle of solid & liquids ie water - to ice - and back to water. Fill a container with water, freeze this and then when frozen encourage children to observe it as it melts and gets smaller. Use a thermometer to show children how it records temperatures.

-Birds & Animals in Winter - Talk to your child about hibernation and migration and taking care of birds in Winter. I have enclosed a fir cone and instructions in how to make a bird feeder - please support your child to make this and then encourage them to observe the various birds as they feed.

-During January we usually introduce the 'Polar Regions' and talk about the North & South Pole, introducing penguins and polar bears. Borrow or purchase a world globe, Children's Atlas or search online for suitable information to promote interest and develop knowledge and understanding.

To keep children in touch with each other we would love to receive some photos of your child at outdoor play in the frost or if snow arrives - we will create an album of these and put them on our webpage for children to browse.

Lastly, I implore you not to give your child excessive screen time - including online learning games etc - research and statistics are showing that children are overloaded and losing communication skills, fine motor skills and that screen time is creating more ADD and ADHD issues, addictive behaviour and poor sleep.

Best Wishes from Julie, Karen, Wendy, Joanne, Lorraine & Caitlin