

April 2008 - Parents Newsletter

Welcome

To all our new children who have started with us. Thank you to all the parents for choosing Cowgate. We hope the children and their families will enjoy the Cowgate experience.

We are delighted to inform you that we have recruited our first male nursery nurse, Tulio. Tulio is joining us from another early years' establishment. We are still undecided which room Tulio will work in, but with every change comes an opportunity. We will keep you up to date on where Tulio will be placed.

Dancebase

Guerley, Ana's mummy, informed us of a class at Dancebase that we may be able to attend.

We called Dancebase and this is what we have found out, there are two possible classes starting the week beginning 14th April.

- 1. 11am -11.45am for toddlers*
- 2. 1.15am – 2.00pm – baby moves*

If you are interested please note your interest to Karen / Linda Lorraine. The classes cost £3.50 per child.

Thank you

First of all thank you so very much to you all for supporting us throughout the inspection process. You know who you are and

we will never forget. The enduring spirit of support from our parents was noted by the inspectors. We are forever in your debt.

We would also like to thank Joanna at this time. Joanna is Grace and Lewis's mummy. She has tirelessly supported us with the library organisation. She always manages to find and gift us 'that little something' to support the centre curriculum. Thank you so very much Joanna we truly appreciate everything you have done and continue to do for us.

Thank you for all the Easter gifts, the staff very much appreciated the little chocolate eggs and so on 😊

We would like to celebrate our magnificent report by having a garden party in May. Invitations will be designed by our wonderful Amie and they will be with you soon.

Spare Clothes

Please can I remind parents to ensure that there are spare clothes in your child's bag? Thank you for your assistance with this.

Grading to help children's service improve

Every children's care service in Scotland is to be clearly rated under the new grading system being introduced by the Care Commission

Nurseries, after-school clubs and residential homes for children will be among those given regular at-a-glance report cards from April this year.

Better informed choice

The grading system is designed to make it easier for parents and guardians to check the quality and performance of a children's care service and make a better informed choice about its suitability for their children's and family's needs.

The new system will involve awarding each service a grade in four separate areas – care and support; environment; staffing; and management and leadership. Each grade will be on a scale of 1-6, with 6 being excellent.

Self-assessment

The scheme will require services to carry out self-assessment, ensuring all children's service managers and staff participate in the process of grading. Children and their families or carers should also be involved. Services will be encouraged to look honestly at their work before choosing their grades, which Care Commission inspectors will then be required to confirm or, in some cases, amend up or down.

Each grade will be backed up by a more detailed report, giving further background information on how and why the grade was agreed. The first batch of reports will be published on 1 July 2008 to allow for a transitional period but grading inspections will be carried out from April 2008.

Involving service users

To achieve top grades in the individual areas, care services must be able to show that they have involved and consulted children and their parents or guardians. It will not be possible to achieve good grades if people using the service have not been involved.

The system of self-assessment will create a new process of inspection, which is expected to see the Care Commission and children's services work together to continually improve the overall quality of care provided.

Pilot studies across Scotland have proven to be successful, with feedback from services reporting the experience of self-assessment and grading to be on the whole positive.

Hugely significant move

Ronnie Hill, Director of Children's Services Regulation at the Care Commission, said: 'This is a hugely significant move for children's workers, parents and everyone in Scotland who has – or will have – contact with a children's care service.'

'We have listened carefully to the views of parents and guardians, and where possible the children and young people themselves, and the message is clear – they want a simple, quick and effective way to rate care services in their area.'

He added: 'Responsible service providers welcome grading, because they fully appreciate that it recognises effort, while the best operators already make very real efforts to involve children and their families. In areas where a service is doing well, services can find it rewarding to have an opportunity to recognise their good work in a structured way. However, where there is room for improvement it can be helpful for a service to look at itself objectively, take stock and identify steps it can take to improve the quality of care provided.'

We have invited our liaison officer Niki Cooney to come and speak to us about the grading, date to be arranged, would any parents like to attend? If so would you please note your interest with Amie?

Curriculum for Excellence Update

Beginning with Science and Numeracy in September 2007 there has been continuing publication of draft experiences and outcomes on Modern Languages, Gaelic learners, Classical Languages, Mathematics, Expressive Arts, Social Studies, Literacy and English. Religious and Moral Education will follow in April and Technologies and Health and Wellbeing in May.

In each paper there is a cover page which explains the thinking behind the draft experiences and outcomes and which is intended to support discussion within establishments and educational authorities.

Expressive Arts

Some experiences and outcomes are specific to the areas of art and design, dance, drama and music. Others are generic and suggest possible activities and experiences that are common to all areas of the expressive arts. Children may access these generic experiences and outcomes in any area of the expressive arts.

The generic experiences and outcomes enable children to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings in creative ways in the expressive arts. There are opportunities for children to experience the energy and excitement when performing as well as being part of an audience. Finally, these generic experiences and outcomes

encourage children to respond to their own and others' work by describing their thoughts and feelings.

Throughout the dance, drama and music experiences and outcomes, children are encouraged to explore, discover and play with movement, expression, sound and rhythm, whilst in art and design, the focus is on creating images and objects, choosing from a range of art materials.

Social Studies

Through social studies, children develop their understanding of the world by learning about their own environment, the wider world and people in different times and places, which are important areas for developing active citizenship.

Within people, past events and societies, the experience and outcomes encourage children to explore items of images to make links to the past and to use imaginative play to explore how people lived in the past.

Throughout people, place and the environment the emphasis is on using the local environment and learning outdoors. Children are encouraged to explore and appreciate nature, experience differing weathers and record the world around them in imaginative ways.

Within people, society, economy and business, the experiences direct children to make choices and take responsibility in their everyday lives. There are also opportunities for them to explore their local communities to discover the different roles people play and the services which are provided.

Science

The science outcomes have been developed in three areas: Our Living world, Our Physical World and Our Material World, which are further divided into:

- *Planet Earth*
- *Energy in the environment*
- *Communication*
- *Forces and motion*
- *Life and cells*
- *Materials*
- *Topical science – no outcomes at early level.*

Each science outcome has suggested learning and teaching strategies embedded within it, in addition to cognitive parts. This will enable all children to engage with the outcome although they may access the cognitive part to a different extent, depending on their level of understanding.

Literacy and English Language

Literacy is the set of skills which allows an individual to engage fully in society and learning, through the different forms of language and the range of texts which society values and finds useful.

Children need to spend time with stories, literature and other texts which will enrich their learning, develop their language skills and enable them to find enjoyment. Spoken language has particular importance in the early years. Practitioners will be aware of the need to balance play-based learning with more systematic development and learning of skills and techniques for

reading, including phonics. There is also an Early Reading paper which describes how the experiences and outcomes might be used as the basis of planning for early reading, and further material will be published on early writing.

The draft outcomes and experiences are organised in three areas:

Reading, Writing and Listening and Talking

Skills in listening and talking provide the foundation for the development of literacy and language skills. To emphasise this, and to show the important links that are made between talking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum, many of the experiences and outcomes are similarly worded. The framework takes into account of the importance of literacy and language skills in the development of thinking and learning.

Mathematics

From the early stages onwards, children and young people should experience success in mathematics and develop the confidence to take risks, ask questions and explore alternative solutions without fear of being wrong. They should enjoy exploring and applying mathematical concepts to understand and solve problems, explaining their thinking and presenting their solutions to others in a variety of ways. At all stages, an emphasis on collaborative learning will encourage children to reason logically and creatively through discussion of mathematical ideas and concepts. Misconceptions and wrong answers should be used as opportunities to improve and deepen children's understanding of mathematical concepts, through the use of effective questioning and discussion.

The mathematics outcomes are outlined within the following organisers:

- *Number, money and measure*
- *Shape, position and movement*
- *Information handling.*

Numeracy

Children and young people need to be confident and competent in their numeracy skills to be able to function responsibly in everyday life and contribute effectively to society. Opportunities – planned and spontaneous, inside and outside – for developing and reinforcing numeracy across the curriculum allow children to strengthen their skills.

Where they use numeracy skills in ways that are relevant to them, children can be more motivated to learn these skills and understand why they matter.

Children can deepen their understanding and learn how to transfer these skills to new contexts when numeracy is developed consistently across different areas of learning. As they practice the foundation numeracy skills of number bonds, multiplication facts and mental strategies within a range of contexts, they can learn to use them more skilfully, giving them greater confidence to apply and extend their skills.

For more information contact:
www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk

Final words...

As I prepare the proposal for my doctorate, my reading led me to this wonderful little quote I wanted to share with you.

My childhood was rich in smells, noises, warmth and little frissons of terror – mostly of my own making. I climbed trees with daring but was hugely frightened. I lifted stones wherever I went in order to inhale the smell of moist earth and the slightly lemony smell of crushed bracken. My thrills were slow worms and toads. There was a pond dipping and racing water boatmen, catching sticklebacks and grazing my knees falling off bicycles and out of trees... Often I took my shoes off and loved the tickly feeling of cut grass, the swishy feeling of long grass, the irresistible roughness of hard sand and the exotic caress of dry sand; but most of all there was mud. How glorious to let it squidge through your toes! And peeling it off when it dried was another sensation altogether.

(Smidt, cited in Rich et al 2005: 6).

Friedrich Froebel emphasised the importance of the garden and the educational importance of learning out of doors more than a century ago. It is therefore appropriate that a modern day Froebelian should consider the way children nowadays can be supported and extended in learning of this kind. I am therefore delighted to inform you that our work as a forest school begins on April 10th

Have a wonderful month

Lynn and the (Excellent) Cowgate team.