



April 2010

Dear Parents and Friends of Cowgate,

First of all A VERY HAPPY EASTER TO YOU All, (I hear the Easter Bunny was at Forest School in Thursday morning...what a busy bunny). As I write the sun is shining...the snow may be lying on the hills, but right now...the sun is shining ☺

April brings, news from the rooms; new baby congratulations; a forest school update; thoughts of transition as our children (and their families) are preparing to move onto primary school; an extract on kindness; we would like to thank Caroline for gathering information for this newsletter from all three play/classrooms...thank you Caroline you are a star ☺ Can I also express my thanks to the staff for everything you have done this month, you know who you are and what you did...you are such a wonderful team a pleasure to be with. THANK YOU ☺

Isn't it funny, I should be writing my PhD today, it is Easter Sunday, but I look at the blank screen and write words that I will delete tomorrow...but when I write of the centre I could write forever...

News from the rooms

La Camera dei Bambini

- ❖ *We warmly welcome our two new babies, Ella and Finn. We hope you enjoy playing with us. However, sad to say, as lovely as it is to welcome new children it means one thing...we say goodbye to our well loved darlings, Mhari, Eleanor and Niara who have moved to the Salle de*

A vibrant garden scene with white and purple flowers and green foliage. The background is a lush green lawn with several white flowers in bloom, some with yellow centers. In the foreground, there are purple flowers and green leaves, possibly from a plant like a lily or a similar species. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

Jeux...oh how they will be missed...but we know they will rise to the challenge of the Salle de Jeux.

- ❖ *As you will have noticed our room has had a bit of a spring change. We have listened to the children and moved the furniture around. The nesting area (sleep area) has been painted by the wonderful Dave. Karen (and her lovely husband) have bought bunting for the sleep room. The old clock will be replaced by something more natural. Lorraine and Karen are exploring having oak flooring in both the Croilean and La Camera dei Bambini. We have been saving up our money from our fund raising efforts and now we want to spend it so that the children benefit.*
- ❖ *It has been lovely having Linda, our student from Ireland, in the room.*
- ❖ *We would like to ask parents if they would bring in some more jar lids, corks, peas and other natural items for our heuristic play supplies.*
- ❖ *Liz is our outings coordinator and she has planned very thoughtful trips for us, we have enjoyed going to the Botanical Gardens, The Museum and The Meadows...thank you Liz, we really do appreciate all the planning that goes into making an outing a success.*

Salle de Jeux

- ❖ *After Easter we will begin our trips to Forest School. The children will become regular adventurers in our Forest School site at Johnston Terrace.*
- ❖ *We enjoyed, very much, our trip to St Andrews Square to see the large photographs of African Animals as part of the Science Festival.*
- ❖ *We've had so much fun celebrating Easter, painting eggs and rolling them in Princes Street Gardens.*

❖ *We are sad too, but happy for our children moving into the Sala Infantil... *Alba, Lewis, Ari and William...but like Bambini's we warmly welcome two new additions to our little community, Daniel and Ben...*

**Can I take this opportunity to thank the parents who have kindly taken our pets, (Harriet and Louis) home over the weekends and for Easter. A special thank you to Alba...I believe you have bought a little home for Harriet so that she can spend a lot of time with you...thank you Alba ☺*

Sala Infantil

- ❖ *We said goodbye to Emily this term. We wish you well Emily and we will miss you ☺*
- ❖ *Mischa (Felix's little sister) is being Christened today, Easter Sunday ☺ How lovely.*
- ❖ *We have been enjoying Easter by painting eggs and making hot cross buns.*
- ❖ *A very happy holiday to the children who are off on holiday*
- ❖ *We are beginning again to design our miniature garden for the garden show at Ingilston in June. The children are already coming up with wonderful ideas.*

Congratulations to Sophia's family

Sophia's mummy gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, Chiara. We wish them all well. Sophia's mummy came in on Thursday and she looked so beautiful, no sign of a tired mummy there...she looked the picture of health and happiness.

Forest School Update

On Tuesday 30th March, eight children, two staff and three students from the Sala Infantil were privileged to be the guests of the Royal Blind School, at their Canaan Lane campus and sensory garden. Margaret Burns of the Royal Blind School had approached Jane in the autumn about linking up with our Forest School programme, so Tuesday was just the beginning, we hope!

We had a lovely day, despite very challenging weather conditions, both in the sensory garden and enjoying the indoor facilities, especially the parachute games in the large hall. We met six pupils, four of whom will be joining us, with their teachers, at Johnston Terrace from 4th May onwards. In the sensory garden our children commented on the water feature, smelly plants such as lavender and noisy ones like the bamboo.

They are such wonderful ambassadors for Cowgate, as they readily made friends with the older children from the Blind School, in fact we all got to know each other quite well, and were given two bird boxes the children had made as part of their John Muir Award, plus Easter chocolate nests as a treat to bring back to nursery.

Altogether a really special, sharing experience. We are now looking forward to meeting our four new friends and showing them round the Forest School site in May.


Additionally, we would like to congratulate Donna for passing her practical Forest School Leaders Assessment. We are delighted to say our very dear Teresa will start her Forest School Training this autumn.



Transition

The transition from early years to primary school is an important one for many young children. It can be a stimulus to growth and development. However, transition needs a sensitive and unhurried approach. At Cowgate we begin the transition process now, in April, beginning with child consultations (through mind-mapping) and parent consultations. Significant to say, over the years a major transformation has taken place between Cowgate and the Primary School(s) our children go to. We have developed strong and equal partnerships by arranging visits, (with the child and their key practitioner) to the schools, and by inviting the teacher to visit the child, here, at Cowgate (and this year we would like to invite pupils from the primary school to come and speak with our children). By fostering good relationships we are supporting continuity for our children as they move from one educational setting to another. When staff members communicate and collaborate well, we believe, we are more likely to broaden our understanding of the child's trajectory from the centre to primary school. We use the visiting times as opportunities to share our understanding of the child through their celebrations and achievements. Transition to school generally has a hugely positive connotation for children. We have discovered our children have a desire to move forward and the challenge of transition can be deeply motivating for them.


Our current curriculum the Curriculum for Excellence 3-18 years (CfE), additionally supports the children's transition to school. There is now much more curricular coherence with this integrated curriculum. As you know our approach to the CfE is holistic. This approach does not mean we banish sequential learning or emergent literacy and numeracy from the centre. Children have many opportunities to develop this knowledge through play,

A child's hands are visible at the top right, holding a purple bag. The background is filled with green grass and several white flowers with yellow centers. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

through a child-centred approach. As you know, young children have a deep desire to communicate and imitate. Their pleasure in what Reggio Emilia calls 'the hundred languages of children' (see below) (Edwards, et al., 1995) needs to be nurtured, and can be channelled towards readiness for school without undue pressure to achieve a pre-specified level of knowledge of proficiency at a given age. If you would like to discuss your child's transition please do not hesitate to let Jane / your child's key practitioner know.

The Hundred Languages of Children

*The child
is made of one hundred
The child has a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking
A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marvelling, of loving
A hundred joys
for signing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.
The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture*


A child's hands are shown holding a purple cloth with white flowers. The child is wearing a green shirt. The background is a lush green field with white flowers. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

*separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only ay Easter and at Christmas.
They tell the child;
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together.
And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.*

*Loris Malaguzzi
(translated by Lella Gandhini)*

Connected with the preceding section on transition - mind-mapping session for children heading into primary

With your permission we would like to hold a mind-mapping session inviting all school age children to express their predictions about what they think school will be like.



Mind-mapping is a consultative process, however at times it is a participative process. The terms consultation and participation are often used interchangeably, but it is helpful to distinguish between consultation as finding out views in order to inform decisions, and participation where direct inputs are made into the decision-making. This mind-mapping session will be consultative. Our aim in mind-mapping is to promote fruitful interaction. Mind-mapping should empower children. Empowerment is associated with allowing children to choose to become active participants in the experience, offering the children the maximum opportunity to put forward their views.

We ask only that if you do not want your child to participate you let us know (this is better known as the opt-out option). The children will of course be consulted on whether or not they would like to be involved. It will be discussed with children beforehand how they would prefer to express themselves, it may be that some children prefer to talk, others may prefer to draw; others may choose to combine methods. The children will select their own method. Our aim is to convey the children's views directly and present them in next month's newsletter.

Rearing to Go

Lian and I are off to Ireland on the 17th April to present at the conference 'Rearing to Go'. Lian and I have presented on many occasions, but this one is a little scary...the other speakers are so very well-known, but we will do our best. Many thanks to Akiko (Mia's mummy) for sharing little anecdotes from your family's life and letting me share them with the conference. Akiko also reminded me of the King Rollo story which is attached for you. I absolutely love this story, the main reason is the most obvious one, if an adult (or significant other) tells a child 'you'll fall' they probably will so there is a little lesson there I think for all of us,



but the other reason I love this story is, that the Queen turns his little mishaps into a success, my kindof woman 😊

Kindness


Last month we highlighted our wonderful Catherine and the kindness she expressed, we should have supported it with this wonderful extract... given to me by a very dear colleague

Kindness

*Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.*

*Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.*

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,



*you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.*

*Then it is only kindness that makes any sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and send you out in the day to mail letters and
purchase bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.*

Naomi Shihab Nye

Warm wishes always

Lynn and the Cowgate team