

May 2010

Dear Parents and Friends of Cowgate,

We would like to begin this newsletter with a poem. We have been asked to write the foreword for a beautiful book written by Claire Warden (of Nature Kindergartens). The book reminds us of all things important when working with young children. This poem is at the beginning of the book, we hope you enjoy it.

The Summer Day

Mary Oliver

*Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*

This newsletter brings: news from the rooms; news of the Froebel conference; a brief note on our in-service day; transition update for our children going to primary school; growing confidence information; awards for all application; CfE and the parent council letter; Fair Trade event; information on 'sound therapy' sessions; thank you to parents; the final pages is a power point presentation from the previous Froebel conference. At the end of the letter dates and events to remember.

La Camera dei Bambini

"We've been making the most of the spring weather. We have been taking lots of trips to the meadows and Princes Street gardens and are planning a further trip on May 10th to Butterfly World. Our new children have settled in well. It is so lovely to see the garden so green again and look out for pictures of Lennox 'the gardener' as he digs his way to the bottom of the tyre."

Salle de Jeux

"We took a trip out to the toyshop to buy a range of lovely animals. The children are showing great interest in these. We have set up a new mark-making area. We are going to the Storytelling Centre (High Street) for a story next week. We have decided to implement the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) alongside our Early Curriculum. Through observation and knowing our children we believe they are ready for the challenges of the CfE. This will be discussed with you."

Sala Infantil

On May 6th we have planned a trip to the Castle. We have the pleasure of having two Moray House students, Georgina and Gemman (fondly known as G & G). G & G planned music sessions with the

children, their focus was 'sounds associated with caterpillars and butterflies using paper to crunch, crumple and flap and so on. A new Forest School group begins on May 4th with our friends from the Royal Blind School.

Rooms – general

Farewell

We said goodbye to Ellen, Linda and Marion, our Irish students on Tuesday. It was an emotional time. They very kindly gave us the beautiful orchid in reception. Many thanks to their supervisors, Cheryl, Michelle and Julie you did a marvellous job.

Medication

Please can we remind parents to pass all medication to staff members for safe keeping. Hazel will support you with forms to complete regarding the administration of medicine and key practitioners will put the medicine in our locked storage space. All medication must be stored in a locked cupboard if it is in the building. Thank you for your assistance with this.

Wooden floors

The staff would like to have oak flooring in the play /classrooms. Can anyone help with either suggesting someone who can give us a quote or offering the services of a joiner / carpenter? Can you please let Lynn know if you can help with this?

Child Psychology Diploma

As you know eleven staff (representing all three rooms) are on the Child Psychology course. For many staff this journey is almost at an end. Well done to you all. One last piece of work and then time to celebrate.

The Froebel Conference 24th April 2010

The Froebel Conference was organised by the Edinburgh Froebel Network. (I am part of the network). The conference on Saturday 24th April was a great success. Many people travelled quite a distance to come, (our dear friend Liz from Denmark made it 😊). Tina (Bruce) did two sessions one on the definition of play, the second session was on block play. Helen (Tovey) did her session on outdoor play. Both Tina and Helen's presentations encouraged many thought provoking discussions. It was wonderful to be so well represented by the Cowgate team, Lorraine, Linda, Karen, Michelle, Teresa and Julie all attended.

One of the loveliest things about these conferences is the networking with likeminded people. Juliet from Creative Star and I shared our children's stories...so if you have time, do two things, look up Juliet's website and look up this story. I shared 'King Rollo' with her and she shared 'Scaredy Squirrel' with me.

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Scaredy-Squirrel-Melanie-Watt/dp/1905117299/ref=cm_lmftit_8

Web: <http://www.creativestarning.co.uk/>

The Froebel Course is on track to run at Edinburgh University this year. Anyone who is interested should contact either Lynn or Dr John Davis. John can be contacted on: Telephone 0131 561 6433/6434 or email: john.davis@ed.ac.uk

At the first conference (October 2009) Jane Read from Roehampton University set the scene by presenting 'An Introduction to Froebel'. Jane is an inspirational speaker. I have added her presentation at the

end of this newsletter. It provides a flavour of what was discussed, but does have excellent quotes. Additionally, there is a good list of Froebelian books listed in the final slides (I know many of you often ask for suggestions of a Froebelian book(s)). As always please only view this if you have an interest in this.

May in-service

On our in-service day we gather information for our 'Standards Quality Improvement Plan'. We explore what we have done, what we are doing and what we are going to do next.

The Sala Infantil are spending the day at Cowgate. Sharing information and then moving on to practical work to progress ideas.

La Camera dei Bambini and Salle de Jeux are visiting another setting.

We will share the Standards Quality Improvement Plan with you and, as always, any ideas you have on how we can continue to progress please share them with us.

Transition

We thought you would be interested in knowing how many primary schools our children will go to: Abbeyhill; St Peter's; St Mary's; Cargilfield; Liberton; Parsons Green; Bonnyrigg; Cramond; The Royal High; Campie; Wallyford; Trinity; Tollcross; Corstorphine; Wardie; Sciennes and Law.

We are in the process of sending invitations to all schools, inviting them to come to Cowgate to see the children here. Wardie has beaten us to it...they have already suggested visiting us...very impressive 😊

The dates we are offering are Friday 21st May and Friday 18th June (both dates 1-3pm).

We are holding a mind-mapping session with the children going to school on Wednesday 5th May and Friday 7th May (as mentioned in the April newsletter). The aim of the mind-mapping session is to discover what the children 'think' school will be like.

We talk of 'consulting children' at mind-mapping sessions. The terms consultation and participation are often used interchangeably, but are quite distinct concepts. The following is a definition of consultation and participation.

"Consultation entails asking children about their views. Participation refers to the extent of children's involvement in decision-making. Consultation may be undertaken without regard to participation but may very well be accompanied by efforts to promote children's involvement in decisions" (Borland et al 2001:1)

*Participation is therefore different to consultation because participation allows children to begin to change their life circumstances and the consultation involves adults listening to children but deciding for them what is done with the information generated by the processes of listening. I would therefore suggest that children **participate** in mind-mapping sessions – the children's views are taken into account, the children share the power of the decisions made...what do you think?*

Growing Confidence

We know many of you have signed up for the growing confidence parent sessions due to start in May. Just to remind you of the aims of the project we have attached the original handout of the project for

you. We have a long list of parents interested and there is no limit so please let Hazel know if you would like to join.

Awards for all

Lorraine has been working very hard on an 'Awards for All' application. The intention is that we will buy a 'Kota Hut'. Jason's mummy viewed the hut at Dobbies. A lot of work goes into these applications and they are not always successful, but it is always worth trying. For a little look go to www.arcticcabins.co.uk.

Parent Council Information

Dear Parent Council Chair

Curriculum for Excellence Explained

We are pleased to advise you that a new Curriculum for Excellence Explained booklet has been sent to you via your school office. Please look out for it as we hope it will provide you with more information about Curriculum for Excellence.

The booklet has been written by the Parent Council Chair of The Royal High School in partnership with the Development Officer. It is intended to be a user-friendly guide to Curriculum for Excellence. For detailed information about your school's Curriculum for Excellence journey, please do speak to your head-teacher.

A downloadable version of this booklet is available on www.edinburgh.gov.uk/curriculumforexcellence. Please look out for a printer-friendly black and white version on the website which you are welcome to download and circulate. If your parent council would like to buy colour copies of the booklet at cost, please contact your Head Teacher in the first instance who will make suitable arrangements.

*With best wishes
Sheila Paton CfE Development Officer*

Fair Trade

In celebration of World Fairtrade Day this Saturday we are planning a plant sale on Friday and Fairtrade cake sale on Monday the proceeds of both will go to Khadi. These events will further support our journey to Fairtrade status.

Sound Therapy

We are hoping to start some Sound Therapy Sessions for our children soon. Some of the staff have been attending sessions and extol the benefits. If you would like your child to take part let Hazel know (please see attached flyers for more information).

Thanks to our parents

We have so many parents to thank this month so please forgive us if we miss anyone out:

- 1. When we were at the Froebel conference we saw amazing resources made out of bike parts. Well Ella's daddy Steven said he can get us all the bike parts we need to make a water resource. Thank you Steven.*
- 2. You have probably noticed our baking pinnies are passed their best. Well Asier's mummy, Anna has agreed to make us new one's. Thank you anna.*

3. *we have entered the beautiful garden competition again this year and Felix's daddy, Keith has offered to make the pallet for the competition. Thank you Keith.*
4. *Catherine's daddy Hamish is coming in to do some work on the woodwork bench. Thank you Hamish ☺*

Thank you all for your on going support. ☺

Warm wishes until next month

Lynn and the Cowgate team

Another email for your interest sent to me by Julie, another likeminded dear friend. Beautiful nursery pictures:

www.preschoolofthearts.com

An introduction to Froebel delivered by the wonderful Jane Read

An Introduction to Froebel

**Jane Read
Edinburgh Froebel Conference
October 31st 2009**

Friedrich Froebel

1782-1852

Who was Froebel?

- **Life**
- **Pedadogy**
- **Legacy**

Shaping forces on Froebel's educational philosophy

- **Key events in his own childhood**
- **Key events in the wider world**

The significance of Froebel's early childhood experiences

- 'In the boyhood and the earliest experiences of Froebel's life, we find the sources of his whole educational system...Although his account of himself is unfinished; we fortunately possess all that is most important for the understanding of the Kindergarten system'
- (E. Michaelis and H. Keatley Moore 'Introductory', in Froebel 1888:2)

Significant events in Froebel's life

- Relationships with family
- Play – or lack of it
- Discovering nature
- Early education
- A different kind of family experience

Key events in the wider world: politics

- American War of Independence – 1775-1783
- French Revolution – 1789 – 1799
- Political unrest following the French Revolution
- Germany – a group of states

Froebel's university career

- Nationalism
- Romanticism:
 - The spiritual significance of the natural world
 - A new vision of family life
 - A new view of the child
- Unity: the key shape of the sphere

- '[E]very circle is for me full of symbolic significance. The ball or sphere is a symbol of perfection, of something complete and finished; it is the symbol of my fundamental spherical principles of education and life'

- (Froebel , 1831, in Lilley 1967: 45)

Froebel's first school: Keilhau

- 'Every being can only be developed through activity, doing and work...can only become capable of understanding and reasoning through doing, work and thinking'

- (Froebel cited in White 1907: 16)

Learning and teaching

‘To have found $\frac{1}{4}$ of the answer to his own question by his own efforts is of more value to the child than to hear it all, half-understood, from another’

(Froebel 1826 *Education of Man*)

Play

‘Play is the highest level of child development. It is the spontaneous expression of thought and feeling - an expression which his inner life requires. This is the meaning of the word 'play'... It promotes enjoyment, satisfaction, serenity, and constitutes the source of all that can benefit the child...’

Play

- At this age play is never trivial; it is serious and deeply significant. It needs to be cherished and encouraged by the parents...'
 - (Froebel 1928, in Lilley, p.83-84)
- 'play, which reflects the free activity of the whole life of the pupil's mind, must give back again that which education and experience have taught him'
 - (Froebel in Lilley 1967: 167)

The child at home

- 'children need encouragement as growing plants need warmth and light, and they must have their parents' love and understanding'

(Froebel in Lilley 1967: 114)

The child at home

- ‘the peculiar intensity with which very small children focus their eyes on objects which are new or strange to them, especially if they are shining or coloured objects’
- ‘Notice how much questioning, examining, weighing and comparing is expressed in the child’s gaze’

(Froebel in Lilley 1967, p.77)

- ‘Look, a child has just found a small stone, perhaps a piece of limestone or chalk. He rubs it on a bit of board near at hand and discovers it makes coloured marks. Delighted with this discovery, he quickly makes use of it and soon covers almost the whole surface of the board. At first it is the fact of discovery which pleases him, then the different colours which appear on the board, but soon his delight is in the shapes he is making. From this his attention turns to the outlines of objects around him; now a head becomes a circle, an oval shape joined on to it is the body, straight or crooked lines are arms or legs, straight lines meeting in a point are fingers, dots are eyes. A new world of ideas and objects opens before him, for one begins to understand that which one strives to represent’

(Froebel in Lilley, 1967, p.87)

The young child: developing thought processes

- he invests everything with life and with the faculties of speaking, feeling and hearing. Just because he is beginning to give expression to his own thoughts he assumes that the same activity is occurring in everything around him, whether it is a stone or piece of wood, a plant, a flower or an animal ' (Froebel in Lilley 1967, p.83)
- '[H]e is much wiser than we are. He needs to know' what the object is really like because he is driven by an innate urge...The broken object, the stone or the flower can at least show the character of its component parts, and surely this is an extension of knowledge?' (ibid, p.86)

- 'We find a freshness and richness in the life of the child who has been rightly guided and cared for in his early years. Is there any part of a person's thought and feeling, knowledge and ability, which does not have its deepest roots in childhood, any aspect of his future education which does not originate here?
 - (Froebel in Lilley 1967, p87)

Froebel's kindergarten at Blankenburg

- 'Children must be supported in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world. Their learning must be supported through offering opportunities for them to use a range of tools safely; encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations; undertake practical 'experiments'; and work with a range of materials'
- (EYFS)

The purpose of the kindergarten

- 'to support parents, particularly working mothers, in the care of pre-school children'
- (Froebel *Duties of the Kindergarten teacher at Blankeburg*, manuscript)
- to provide an environment where children felt secure enough to match their inner life with the demands of the outside world, where opportunities existed for children to experiment through their play in areas not yet known, but vaguely surmised'
- (Liebschner, 1991: 15)

The purpose of the kindergarten

‘encouraging the child's impulse to activity, investigation and creative work. It will be an institution where children instruct and educate themselves and where they develop and integrate all their abilities through play, which is creative self- activity and spontaneous self-instruction’

A New Year's Meditation

Gifts into Occupations

- ‘They are a coherent system, starting at each stage from the simplest activity and progressing to the most diverse and complex manifestations of it...They cover the whole field of intuitive and sensory instruction and lay the basis for all further teaching. They begin by establishing spatial relationships and proceed to sensory and language training’
- (Froebel *Plan of an Institution which will educate children by fostering their impulse to creative activity*, in Lilley 1967: 98)

‘Singing, drawing, painting and modelling at an early stage must, therefore, be taken into account in any comprehensive scheme of education. The aim is...to enable every person to develop all sides of his nature, while recognising man's abilities in their full diversity...’ (Froebel in Lilley 1967, p. 155)

- ‘Music is especially important, since the sounds which he produces in singing or by striking bells or glass or metal serve to give creative expression to feelings and ideas’

(Froebel *Pedagogics of the Kindergarten*, in Lilley 1967: p.13)

Froebel’s practice at Blankenburg

- ‘every Tuesday and Friday we have games and occupations from two to four’

- ‘The playtime is devoted half to building, and half to games’

- (Froebel, *Letters*, p.54 & 55)

‘education in instruction and training...should necessarily be passive, following (only guarding and protecting), not prescriptive, categorical, interfering’

(Froebel, 1968: 7)

Children's play at Blankenburg

- After the morning prayer, the children go to their little seats at a long table, and look around for some means of playing out the ideas which are filling their minds more or less clearly. At their request, little boxes of blocks are given to them, and they begin without delay to play eagerly. One child remembers how he has just had breakfast with his dear parents, and he quickly builds a table surrounded with chairs...Yonder a child shows us quite a different idea. He has seen a shepherd starting out in the early morning with his flock; and so he represents the shepherd prominently, with the sheep obediently following him. Thus each child follows his individual bent, according as the spirit moves him...Here is a boy who has built an anvil...There is a little girl who has built a town hall. Her father goes there every morning when she comes to the kindergarten'

(Middendorff Die Kindergarten, 1848, cited in Owen 1906)

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Dates and Events to remember

Monday 17th and Tuesday 18th Centre closed

- *Teddy Picnic Booklets on sale*
- *Fair Trade Saturday, plants and baking for sale on Friday and Monday to celebrate Fair Trade. All proceeds will go to Kadi.*
- *Primary School Staff invited to come and see the school leaving children on Friday 21st May (1-3pm) and Friday 18th June (1-3pm)*