

## *Newsletter – August 2008*

*Welcome dear parents and friends of Cowgate,*

*This newsletter brings lots of wonderful things...*

- Welcome to our new children and their families*
- Invitation to a 'self-esteem' course*
- Inspiring emotional harmony*
- Trip to Denmark*
- Music in the garden*
- Berry picking*
- Eco idea*

### *Welcome to our new children and families*

*We are in the process of visiting our new children in their homes. This is such a wonderful experience, an opportunity to build warm relationships at the earliest opportunity. It is of course sad to say goodbye to our school leaving children, but as I watch them leave us bursting with confidence I know they will be such enthusiastic learners who will very much enjoy the next part of their journey.*

*Welcome to Dave who started on Monday – we hope you will be very happy working here.*

*Congratulation to Chris and Laura on the birth of their beautiful daughter 'Emilia'*

### *Invitation to a self-esteem course*

*Are you interested in attending a 'Self-Esteem' course? One of our parents has asked us to invite you to a free Introductory Evening with wine and cheese on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August 7-10pm @ 138/3 Newhaven Road, Trinity, Edinburgh where you learn more about the course.*

*For any enquiries, please call: Cath Shephard on 01721 723931 or Antoinette Ross on 0131 661 1723.*

*The following is an extract from the leaflet.*

*“Self-esteem is our idea of our own basic worth, and it has its roots in our childhood. Early on, our sense of value is associated with the positive regard of others, or linked with our achievements. We may accomplish much in later life, yet feel dissatisfied because our self-esteem still depends on our next success or failure. It is as if we ‘missed something’ – life is like a treadmill, lacking real excitement or purpose. The Power of Self Esteem shows you how to identify this deeply-rooted system of beliefs, and develop a new kind of awareness of who, and what, you really are.*

*The leaflet covers other areas such as...self-expression, self-fulfilment, enhancing your self-esteem...if you would like to peruse it please do, I will leave a copy on the parents notice board.*

### ***Inspiring Emotional Harmony***

*We are working on a new policy, with great reluctance to use the words ‘managing behaviour’ we have decided on ‘Inspiring Emotional Harmony’. We hope to develop a policy which supports our philosophy and practice. Anyone with any suggestions on how this policy could / should be developed please let me know. Responding to parental requests I have included a chapter at the end of this newsletter on ‘Understanding the behaviour of Children’ from Child Care & Education (Bruce & Meggitt 2006) this is written for practitioners, but I hope you find it useful.*

### ***Trip to Denmark***

*Jane and I are finally booked on our trip to Denmark to study pedagogy (January 19<sup>th</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> 2009).*

*Each course aims to give participants an understanding of:*

- *The pedagogical theories underpinning Scandinavian practice.*

- *The use of the outdoor environment in the learning processes and curriculum.*
- *Design and function of the indoor and outdoor environments.*
- *Practical workshops involving activities and problem-solving methods.*
- *Visits and observations; the visits will be to different kinds of mainstream and special institutions and schools that illustrate a diversity of provision.*

*We are really looking forward to it!*

### ***Music in the garden***

*As you know we were successful in applying for the grant for musical instruments. Amie and Lorraine have designed a little music corner, which will be given a name. We are very excited about the thought of developing this area. Many thanks again to Lorraine and Amie for all their hard work – the children will have such joy.*

*Music brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development.*

*Young children learn most naturally and effectively through a subtle balance of free play, movement and rhythm (Hand Made Places).*

*These are the musical instruments we are buying:*

- *An Amadina*
- *A Manta Ray with Base*
- *Swirl into the Ground*
- *Drums (Leo and Miro's favourites 😊)*

*As you know with these musical instruments you do not need to have a special skill, anyone can have a go. What we now for sure is that these free note musical instruments will bring real pleasure to the children and give them a sense of achievement.*

### ***Berry Picking***

*We had a lovely day at the farm picking berries and subsequently eating them ☺ the children have made a considerable amount of raspberry jam.*

*It was such a lovely experience; it is such a beautiful place. Lots of lovely space for the children to play, when they aren't picking (or eating berries). As well as fruit, I brought back lovely tall lilies from... 'Willies Lilies'. Next year we will arrange a meeting place, perhaps at the wonderful café where they sell home baking.*

*Until next time.*

### ***Eco Idea – Indian Soap Nuts***

*As you know we are always thinking about our eco philosophy and things we can do. We wanted to share the following idea with you.*

#### *Indian Soap Nuts*

*Soap nuts are a washing detergent that grows on trees – used in Millennia, now discovered for the modern world.*

*The advantages of soap nuts in a nutshell:*

- *Pure and natural washing detergent that leaves your laundry fresh and clean*
- *Keeps your colours bright*
- *Allergy free, good for your skin*
- *Environmentally friendly, chemical free*
- *Cultivated through sustainable agriculture*
- *Ecological and economical compared to other brands of detergent. Two pounds of soap nuts can be used for more than 100 loads of laundry.*

*In India and Nepal the soap nut (*sapindus trifoliatus*) has been used as a vegetable washing detergent for a very long time.*

*The soap nut tree grows mainly in South India. In March and April the tree is adorned with white flowers, and the ripe soap nuts are harvested in October. When removed from the tree the soap nuts are sticky and golden in colour. They are dried and their colour becomes reddish-brown. Then the nuts are cracked and the black kernel, which can neither be eaten nor used for washing is removed and the shell, which contain saponine (a natural detergent) are packed up in cotton bags.*

### *How does it work?*

*The somewhat sticky saponine in the shells of the soap nuts acts similar to normal soap. As soon as the shells gets in contact with water this natural saponine soap is released and creates mild suds. Place four to five half shells in one of the provided cotton bags, tie the bag and place it with your laundry in the washing machine. Start your machine as usual, with or without a pre-wash. The remains of the soap nuts can be composted or be disposed of through organic refuse.*

*The soap nut can be easily used in your washing machine. Unlike common washing powders and liquids that contain considerable amounts of chemicals the soap nut is environmentally friendly and is gentle to the skin.*

*Used for all fabrics with all temperatures.*

### *Tips*

- *No need for fabric softeners*
- *Work well with delicate fabrics such as silk and wool*
- *When washing in cold to warm water soap nuts can be used for a second time the same day.*

*This was Donna's idea, isn't it good? She has lots more. Donna hopes our children can have a little allotment somewhere in the city. Nick, Hamish's daddy is looking into it! Here's hoping ☺*

*Eco –Group*

*Are there any parents interested in joining our eco group? If so please let Lorraine know.*

*Final note...*

*Our summer fair is on August 16<sup>th</sup>. All contributions for the tombola gratefully received ☺*

*Warm wishes everyone for August. I am off for a few weeks annual leave from 15<sup>th</sup> August, hopefully to finally write my proposal. Take care until then.*

*Lynn ☺*



## Understanding the behaviour of children

### Managing Behaviour (or Developing Self-Discipline)

*There are two ways of looking at the behaviour of children:*

*When we try to manage the child's behaviour, we work from the outside in. We try to control how the child behaves, using a variety of techniques. But what will happen when we are not there?*

*When we give children strategies to develop their own self-discipline, we work from the inside out. We try to help the child manage their own behaviour; this is called self-discipline. But what will happen when we are not there?*

*Research shows that self-discipline is the only kind of discipline worth having if we want behaviour to be lastingly good for the child and for us as a society. When Judge Tumin, who died recently, was the Chief Inspector of Prisons, he found that predominantly male prisoners (18-25 years) had low self-esteem and no self-discipline. They were dependent on others to manage their behaviour.*

### Offering Alternative Distractions to Children

*Sometimes an adult can see trouble looming and can avoid a confrontation by offering an alternative. Alternatives are better than confrontations, which often result in temper tantrums and more challenging behaviour.*

### Being a Role Model

*Remember that children notice and learn from your feelings, actions and reactions. You are a powerful source of learning for the child. So you should:*

*Give children a predictable environment (but not necessarily a rigid routine);*

*Try to avoid confrontations or humiliation by respecting a child's personality and mood, and knowing what the child can manage without too much struggle;*

*Explain that there is a real boundary if a confrontation becomes unavoidable – a boundary that a child cannot cross.*

### *Behaviour Management Strategies Which Encourage Self-Discipline*

*Young children often do not realise that they are doing something unacceptable. They need help to begin to understand when something is inappropriate.*

*Froebel believed that every bad act has a good intention. He thought that adults should try to find out what this intention was, and help the child by acknowledging it. Then he believed it is easier to put right the 'bad' that the child has done. When children do things that we do not want them to do, it is easy to feel annoyed and impatient.*

*However, thinking positively and keeping a sense of humour enable us to remain professional with children who challenge our patience and stamina. There are four main approaches to the management of behaviour (the fourth type is most appropriate to your work and you should always use it in preference to other strategies):*

- 1. Using punishment as revenge;*
- 2. Behaviour modification;*
- 3. Time out;*
- 4. Focussing on reform.*

*The unacceptable and unethical approach can be summed up in the statement, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' This means that what you do to me, I will do to you; if you hit me, I will hit you. In many countries, such as Sweden, it is now illegal to smack, beat or 'strap' a child. In the UK it is illegal in early years settings. Children who are smacked often hit other children, usually younger and smaller children. They are imitating the fact that big adults smack small children. Children*

*do not understand punishment as revenge – as well as being a cruel strategy, it simply does not work,*

### *Behaviour Modification*

- *Negative reinforcement*
- *Positive reinforcement*

*Adults can encourage children to do what they want them to do by giving them rewards. However, the strategy only works in the short term, and the effect wears off quite quickly. The problem is that rewards do not make children think about why they want to do things. Any motivation is short-lived.*

#### *Case Study*

##### *Using rewards may not be effective*

*Marion Dowling gives this example:*

*...in one study in a nursery school, a group of children were provided with drawing materials and told that they would receive a prize for drawing which, in due course, they did. Another group were given the same materials but with no mention of prizes. Some time after, drawing was provided as one of a range of optional activities...significantly, the children who chose to spend the least time on drawing were those who had been previously rewarded.*

### *Time Out*

*The adult might say to the child, 'If you scribble on the books again, you will have to sit on the time-out chair for a few minutes.' This might put the child off scribbling in books, but in a different situation, for instance when staying at grandma's, it will not prevent the child scribbling on the wall of the bedroom. Children can only make the obvious connection and may not be able to extend what they have learned to a different context. Vivian Gussin-Paley has written a book about the limitations of the time-out chair; the book is 'Wally's Stones.' In a similar way, it is not*

*helpful to punish children some time after the event. They do not connect what they did earlier with what is being done to them now.*

*Always remember, it is a mistake to make children do a drawing or look at a book as a punishment because this will give the message that these are unpleasant activities.*

### *Focussing on Reform*

*Research shows that from about 3 years children begin to feel guilt and shame about the things they do. However, they cannot learn about social behaviour if they cannot make sense of what is done to them. That is why a focus on reform rather than on revenge or deterrent is effective in the long term. In the section below strategies are given which encourage reform and the development of self-discipline.*

### *Containment and holding*

*It is important not to leave a child in the middle of a tantrum. Quietly holding them and being there for them provides support through this time until they begin to feel calm. Psychologists refer to this as containment. Containing a child's feelings with gentle and calm physical support helps the child to feel cared for. It also reassures the child that they will not be left alone to lose control. It is important that children have a good relationship with adults who hold their feelings of anger for them in this way. The adult acts as a 'container' which holds the child's anger in a safe way so that the child does not feel out of control. This helps the child regain a sense of calm. It is no good trying to discuss what has happened with a child who is in the middle of a temper tantrum or who is being aggressive. The child needs to become calm before talking.*

### *Preventing Aggressive Behaviour*

*Aggressive behaviour (hitting, shouting or spoiling another child's painting, for example) can sometimes be prevented if adults put on their running shoes! The adult must get there before the behaviour happens,*

*gently saying 'no' and removing the child. This can be a very useful strategy, particularly with children under 3 years.*

### *Discussing the Situation*

*Eye contact is very important in your dealings with children. So are your body language and the gestures you use. These can be more important than what you say. Communication is 85% non-verbal.*

### *Challenging Behaviour in a Group Situation*

*Disruptive behaviour in a group is best dealt with by not giving the challenging child attention: concentrate instead on all the other children who are not being disruptive. You might say: 'I can see most of you are ready for the story: You have all found your cushions and are sitting there looking really interested. I am so looking forward to reading this story because it is one of my favourites.'*

*Being ignored is not what an attention seeker hopes for. Children are helped if they realise that they gain positive and warm attention from you if they are cooperative.*

### *Setting Clear Boundaries*

*Children need clear, consistent boundaries in order to manage their own behaviour. They will test out boundaries that are not clear or consistent: they will check to see if a boundary is still there: to see if it can be moved; whether all the adults will uphold a particular boundary. This can become very tedious from the adult's point of view! It is best to have just a few boundaries, agreed to by everyone in the team – and agreed by the children, if at all possible. It helps children to feel secure when a boundary is strong, clear and comforting – 4 year olds often say with great satisfaction, 'You're not allowed!' When a child oversteps a boundary, it is important that they are not made to feel worthless or disliked for what they have done. This can be avoided if the child's actions are criticised, rather the child themselves. For example say, 'Kicking hurts. Jo is very upset because it hurt,' rather than, 'Don't do*

*that. You are very naughty, and I am cross with you.' The message needs to be: I am not rejecting you; I am rejecting what you did.*

### *Opportunities for Movement*

*Often children simply need opportunities for play involving extensive physical movement. This is becoming increasingly important now that more children spend time in extended provision. Children who do not spend time on the floor, spinning and titling, and climbing and jumping often develop behaviour problems, and even a mild form of ADHD, which has been socially induced because they are required to sit and be still too much.*

### *Theories of Emotional and Social Development*

*The nature – nurture controversy*

*Nature and Inheritance*

*In the past it was thought that personalities are fixed from the moment we are born (this is the nature argument). It is probably too extreme a view, just as the view that intelligence is fixed at birth is extreme.*

*Children who have grown up without other people do not seem to show the kind of social behaviour we think of as human; they do not make sounds, smile, use eye contact or walk like humans. This suggests that their social behaviour is not simply fixed in their genes and inherited. Such children include:*

- Feral children, sometimes known as 'wolf children';*
- Children who are kept isolated from other people.*

*The nature approach includes the psychodynamic theories of Freud, Erikson, Winnicott and Bowlby, which concentrate on the feelings we have inside us, and on how other people can help us, and how other people can help us to express and deal with these. These theorists believe*

*that our early feelings and experiences never leave us. They are always deep inside us and they affect us throughout our lives.*

*Social behaviour as a result of nurture*

*Nature theories include:*

- *Skinner's behaviourist theory;*
- *Socialisation theory;*
- *Bandura's social learning theory.*

*These theories, which state that social behaviour is learned, have been challenged since the 1980s.*

#### *Case Study*

*Judy hits Amandip*

*The adult says, Amandip is crying because that hurt. He is very upset. What happened? He took your toy? Did you take Jody's toy, Amandip? [Amandip nods] 'Next time, Jody, try saying "It's mine." Then he will know how you feel about it.'*

*This approach signals to Amandip that he must not snatch Jody's toy, but it also allows him to find a way out with dignity.*

*Furthermore, it gives Jody the words that she needs to use instead of hitting. It rejects what both children did, but it does not reject either child. It helps both children to have some ideas of how they might tackle the situation next time. This is punishment as reform, and it will help the children think about moral matters and to develop self-discipline. It helps children to examine the results of what they do.*

*Guidelines for managing children's behaviour*

- ❖ *Can you distract the child? If a child keeps grabbing the paint pot from another child ask the first child to help you mix more pots of paints. This distracts the child and takes you both out of a negative situation.*
- ❖ *Does the child need personal space? Sometimes children cannot share or be with other children for too long. They need to do their own thing. Respect this and help the child to move into a solitary activity.*
- ❖ *Does the child need help to express and talk about how they feel? Opportunities for role play or to bash and bang and lump of clay can be very helpful in this situation.*
- ❖ *Does the child need help with a side-by-side strategy?*
- ❖ *Should two children be left together? They may have been together too long, or perhaps their personalities are clashing and they find it hard to spend time together. When this usually it is usually best to find a way of separating the children.*
- ❖ *Can you help children to negotiate? (Remember, they may be too angry or upset to do this.)*
- ❖ *Sometimes children's feelings just erupt. They can be a danger to themselves or to other children. It is always best if children can be helped before this point is reached, but sometimes the eruption of feelings is unavoidable. Children can be very frightened by the power of their feelings and may be overwhelmed if they lose control. They need you to contain their anger and feelings for them.*
- ❖ *Are children bored? Are the room and outdoor area interesting enough places? Are the children free to choose activities for themselves?*
- ❖ *Is the child hungry? Hunger makes us all crabby?*
- ❖ *Is there any physical reason for the behaviour? Does the child lack pain sensation in some aspects, and is the child clumsy?*
- ❖ *Is the child uncomfortable? If so, try to find out why. (Maybe they have wet themselves).*
- ❖ *Do they need rough-and-tumble play? Children need safe, movement spaces where they can be noisy and move freely, both indoors and outdoors.*
- ❖ *Do they need to slow down? Children need calmer periods where they have personal space, perhaps making a little den for*

*themselves, reading alone in the book area or having a story read by an adult.*

- ❖ Can you redirect the situation? Sometimes you will see something building up and may be able to prevent the situation arising by moving in before it happens.*
- ❖ Do you value children's efforts and express your feelings? Children are able to tidy up with adult help, but they need their efforts to be recognised and warmly appreciated.*
- ❖ Do the children have enough opportunities to play? Indoors and outdoors?*
- ❖ Are you taking a flexible view? Show initiative and negotiating might be valued in some situations, but conformity might be more important in others, such as crossing the road*
- ❖ Remember that behaviour which is valued universally in the world has to do with helping others, having feelings for others, sharing and taking turns, and understanding somebody else's feelings and ideas.*

*Final note...*

*Dear parent,*

*This may or may not be useful to you as it was written for practitioners, but hopefully it reassures you that if your wonderful child is not responding to certain techniques you are using, everyone finds certain aspects of children's responses to situations difficult at times. Together...we will find a way.*

*Warm wishes*

*Lynn*