8th January 2021

Welcome to our January/February newsletter, and a Happy New Year to you all! I hope that all our families stayed safe and healthy over the festive period.

2020 was a challenging year for us all, but we got through it! I would like to praise my Team at Monkey Puzzle Ealing for doing an excellent job, considering how busy we were, and still are! Our strategy of working together with parents has worked so far, and I would like to say a big and heartfelt thank you to you all!

New children

We would like to welcome the following children and their families to our nursery: Edie P, and Kenzo (both Baby Room); and Liya (Preschool Room).

Staff news

I am delighted to announce that Baljinder has been promoted to Preschool Room Leader. I am sure that you will join me in wishing Baljinder well in her new role.

Babies and Teenies activities

The Babies and Teenies have been learning to feed themselves under our watchful eye, and several of the children have been walking independently. The children have been learning to move their whole body to sounds that they have enjoyed, and we have observed some great dance moves in our Baby Room! Why not get the whole family together for a family dance! This could be a special family time, and will provide healthy exercise for all. I am sure that your Little One will find it especially fun to watch you and your dance moves and will try to recreate the moves! You are welcome to send in your family dance picture for our nursery display for all our children to see.

The children have also been learning how to respond to various, simple questions, such as “Where is your nose/eye/mouth?”

The older babies have been learning to understand simple sentences, and to follow simple directions. Most of our older babies have developed their own personal words, and it is heartwarming to see them having a conversation amongst themselves in their own ‘baby language’!

The children produced some beautiful artwork for the Christmas displays, and cards for their parents and grandparents. I am sure that you all liked these, as I have received some lovely feedback from both parents and grandparents.

The children had been using different craft materials and paints to decorate the display boards in their room for the festive season. Our Baby Room was the winner of our in-house competition this year, for producing the best art in the nursery, with consideration to age-appropriate art and materials used. Our Toddler and Preschool Rooms also produced some wonderful art and fantastic displays.

We had a small Christmas tree in our Baby Room, and Santa came to deliver presents for all. I hope you enjoyed the photos sent to you of your child with Santa!

Our older babies have been learning to respond to a few appropriate boundaries, with encouragement and support. The children have been learning to count through singing and looking at objects while counting.

Why not continue this activity at home by counting fruit in a bowl on the table, or by counting spoons while setting the dinner table? I am sure that the children will enjoy doing this, and will learn too.

Toddler and Preschool activities

The Toddlers (2-3 year-olds) and Pre-school (3-5 year-olds) children have been talking about similarities and differences in Christmas celebrations in different countries. Previously, we celebrated Halloween and the children wore some great costumes! All the rooms had their own pumpkins and, together with their teachers, prepared the pumpkins and made holes for eyes, a nose and mouth. The Toddlers went one step further, providing hair for their pumpkin which was different but a great idea! Children loved this activity, and thought that their pumpkin was not scary at all, but friendly and funny!

Potty training is going well in the Toddler Room. A huge thank you to all parents and staff in the Toddler Room for working hard on this.

The Toddlers produced some pretty decorations, art and cards for Christmas.

The Preschool children have been learning to recognise and write the first letter of their names, or their whole name, and also to recognise and draw shapes. The children also talked about dinosaurs, which remain the main interest for our older children. The children enjoy playing with the dolls during free play.

The children helped to hollow out and present their pumpkin in the room. The children, led by Mahboubeh, also participated in making jammy biscuits for Halloween. While making the biscuits, the children were learning the names of the ingredients used and the quantity of each ingredient. They made biscuits for all children in the nursery to take home. I hope that the children shared these with you or their siblings!

Why not continue this activity at home, by making biscuits or simple bread for the whole family once a week while at home during lockdown. Please feel free to send your photos of this activity to me for our nursery display. You can find recipes for Christmas biscuits in our Christmas activity book, and these can be adapted for different occasions.

As you are aware Santa was not able to come to the nursery's Toddler and Preschool Rooms this year. As explained in my earlier email, the Real Santa was kind enough to allow Baljinder to wear his costume, and asked her to hand out the presents to the children (we did not want to trick the children, as the older children would have recognised Baljinder)!

Baljinder did a fantastic job, and added to the fun all day at the nursery. This was followed by Christmas lunch for the children and staff.

Thank you Baljinder for stepping in for Santa this year - you did a great job!

The Preschool children decorated their large Christmas tree. They followed this by drawing, painting and decorating a picture of a tree for our display. We asked the children what they would like Santa to bring for them. We had some great answers from the children!

I hope that your children enjoyed the colouring at home, and searching for the hidden Monkey Puzzle monkey in our Christmas activity booklet!

Department for Education's rationale to keep nurseries open

As one of the largest childcare providers in the UK, Monkey Puzzle Head Office is directly engaged with the Department for Education, working with them and other large providers to inform changes to policy and guidance as well as keeping the needs of children and parents at the forefront of their thinking. The Department for Education was asked to provide clarity for families at this difficult time, helping you to understand the rationale behind their decision to keep nurseries open. Here is their response:

The reason schools have been restricted is not that they are unsafe but because additional measures are needed to contain the spread of the virus. The wider restrictions in place as part of the national lockdown to contain the spread of the virus in the community enable us to continue prioritising keeping nurseries and childminders open, supporting parents and delivering the crucial care and education needed for our youngest children.

Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. 0-5 year olds continue to have the lowest confirmed rates of coronavirus of all age groups, and there is no evidence that the new variant of coronavirus disproportionately affects young children. Evidence shows that pre-school children are less susceptible to infection and are not playing a driving role in transmission. There is no evidence the new strain of the virus causes more serious illness in either children or adults and there continues to be strong evidence that children are much less susceptible to severe clinical disease than older people.

PHE advice remains that the risk of transmission and infection is low if early years settings follow the system of controls, which reduce risks and create inherently safer environments.

Early years settings have been open to all children since 1 June and there is no evidence that the early years sector has contributed to a rise in virus cases within the community. Early evidence from SAGE showed that early years provision had a smaller relative impact on transmission rate than primary schools, which in turn had a smaller relative impact than secondary schools.

Early years childcare providers were one of the first sectors to have restrictions lifted last summer, in recognition of the key role they play in society. Childminders and nursery staff across the country have worked hard to keep settings open through the pandemic so that young children can be educated, and parents can work. The earliest years are the most crucial point of child development and attending early education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and supports children's social and emotional development. We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing and to support working parents. Caring for the youngest age group is not something that can be done remotely.

Sickness policy

I would like to remind all parents to please keep their children at home if they are feeling unwell for any reason. This will protect our staff and children, and allow the nursery to remain open.

If your child becomes unwell at the nursery, I, or a member of staff, will ask you to pick up your child. Please co-operate with us, as this decision would have been made in the best interest of your child, as well as the children and staff at our nursery.

I would urge all parents to adhere to the coronavirus government guidelines. If you, or someone in your household, has been asked to self-isolate, please let us know

and please do not send your child into nursery for 10 days. This also applies if you have another child at school who has been sent home to self-isolate. Please keep your nursery child at home for 10 days.

If we send your child home with a high temperature, or persistent cough, you will not be allowed to bring your child back to nursery for 10 days, unless your child tests negative for coronavirus.

I appreciate the frustration of working parents, and that our decision may not be popular, but we must adhere to the guidelines to keep our nursery community and the wider community safe – this must be our priority. We need to ensure that our nursery can remain open for all other children and staff, and we cannot afford to take any risks.

Please let me know on the same day, by email or by phone, if your child will not be attending nursery that day. This is especially important because of our current COVID guidance. I need to know the reason why your child is not at nursery (even if it is not COVID-related). Thank you.

Shoes from home and indoor shoes

Please could you ensure that the children's shoes from home are clean when the children come into the nursery, to keep our nursery carpet clean. The children do take their shoes off when they enter the nursery, but they do need to put them back on again when getting ready to go to the garden, or when going from the garden to the toilet. The children also keep their shoes on when they come back from the garden to avoid delays during home time.

Could I also ask parents from the Toddler and Preschool groups to bring in inside shoes for their children if you have not done so already. Although it is warm in the nursery, children should be wearing indoor shoes, preferably slippers, that children can easily put on and take off by themselves. Thank you!

Christmas Jumper Day

Thank you to all children and staff who participated in our Christmas Jumper Day – during this time, they certainly gave us much-needed cheer! As a result, Monkey Puzzle Ealing has donated a total of £100.00 to the charity, Save the Children.

Word of the month

'Equality' is our word of the month for January. We will be talking about 'responsibility' as our word of the month for February.

Language of the month

Our languages of the months of January and February are Polish and German, respectively.

Forthcoming special days/celebrations

18th January- Pyjama Day
27th January - Tu B'Shevat (Jewish)
12th February - Chinese New Year
14th February - Valentine's Day
15th February - Nirvana Day (Buddhist)
16th February - Pancake Day (Shrove Tuesday)

"Saving our planet" - MP Ealing project update

Our "Save our Planet" project continues!

Over the past few months, we have been teaching and encouraging our children to look after our planet. We are still working on our very own Monkey Puzzle Book "Saving the Planet". In the mean time, we will be talking about climate change, and adapting activities for the children's age group. We will engage the children in interesting science experiments, for example, melting ice (turning from solid to liquid) and talking about why this happens. We will also be talking about plastics in our natural waters/oceans and the danger that this causes to fishes and other animals. We will show the children

pictures, and will listen to their thoughts about this.

We managed to plant some seeds into our garden planter and allotment area. We explained to the children that some seeds need to be planted in Autumn/Winter so that they can grow and bloom in the Spring/Summer. We will be monitoring the growth and development of these plants together and hope that our garden will become colourful in the Spring/Summer!

Change of contact details
Please email me if you have changed address or phone number and have not informed us yet.

Nursery closure for INSET day
Our INSET days this year will be on Friday 16th July and Friday 27th November 2021. The nursery will be closed on these days for essential staff training. Please arrange alternative childcare for these days.

Please note that monthly fees take INSET days into consideration so that you are not charged.

Adhering to social distancing guidelines
Thank you to all parents for adhering to our safety and social distancing guidelines to keep our staff and children safe.

Nursery opening/closing time
I would like to remind all parents that the nursery opens at **8:00 am**. Please do not come any earlier and do not enter the Nursery before 8:00 am as our staff will be conducting risk assessments and preparing the nursery for breakfast before 8:00 am. **Please DO NOT ring the bell before 8:00 am** to avoid delays in our preparation of the nursery for opening.

Please pick up your child by 5:30 pm when possible to allow our staff enough time to disinfect and clean the nursery ready for the next nursery day.

Pushchairs
Thank you to those parents who have been leaving their pushchairs at home, thus helping to minimize movements in the nursery at this critical time.

If you must leave your pushchairs at the nursery, please ensure that it is folded up and placed against the wall in the storage area, away from the fire exit route.

Emergency mobile telephone number
If you need to call the nursery, please phone our nursery landline on 020 8840 1116. If for any reason the landline is down, please call the emergency nursery mobile on **07745219888** (please do not leave voicemail or text messages on the nursery mobile. Messages may, however, be left by email). If in doubt, you can contact Head Office on 01442 878887.

Absences
If your child is unwell or intends to be away from the nursery for any reason (eg, holidays or sickness), please could you let us know as soon as possible. This helps us to plan our activities and staff rotas. If your child is unwell, please let us know why as soon as possible, to prevent the spread of infection.

Please note that nursery fees are payable when your child is off sick or away on holiday, as specified in our Terms and Conditions. In addition, registered attendance days cannot be changed or swapped.

Contacting the nursery
If you need to contact the nursery, please telephone us on our landline. You may also email me at manager@monkeypuzzleealing.co.uk, but please be aware that I am not always at my desk to pick up emails throughout the day. Please phone me for anything urgent, or for anything that needs my same-day attention.

Please do not hesitate to call whenever you need to check on your child's day at the nursery, or for any other reason, as we MUST minimise face-to-face feedback under the current situation.

If you have any concerns, queries or suggestions, please feel free to speak to me at any time.

Biljana Dokmanovic
Manager, Monkey Puzzle Day Nursery Ealing
020 8840 1116